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Coach and Bus Week
The PSV industry's news weekly • 28 September 1996 • Issue 237

BUMPER issue
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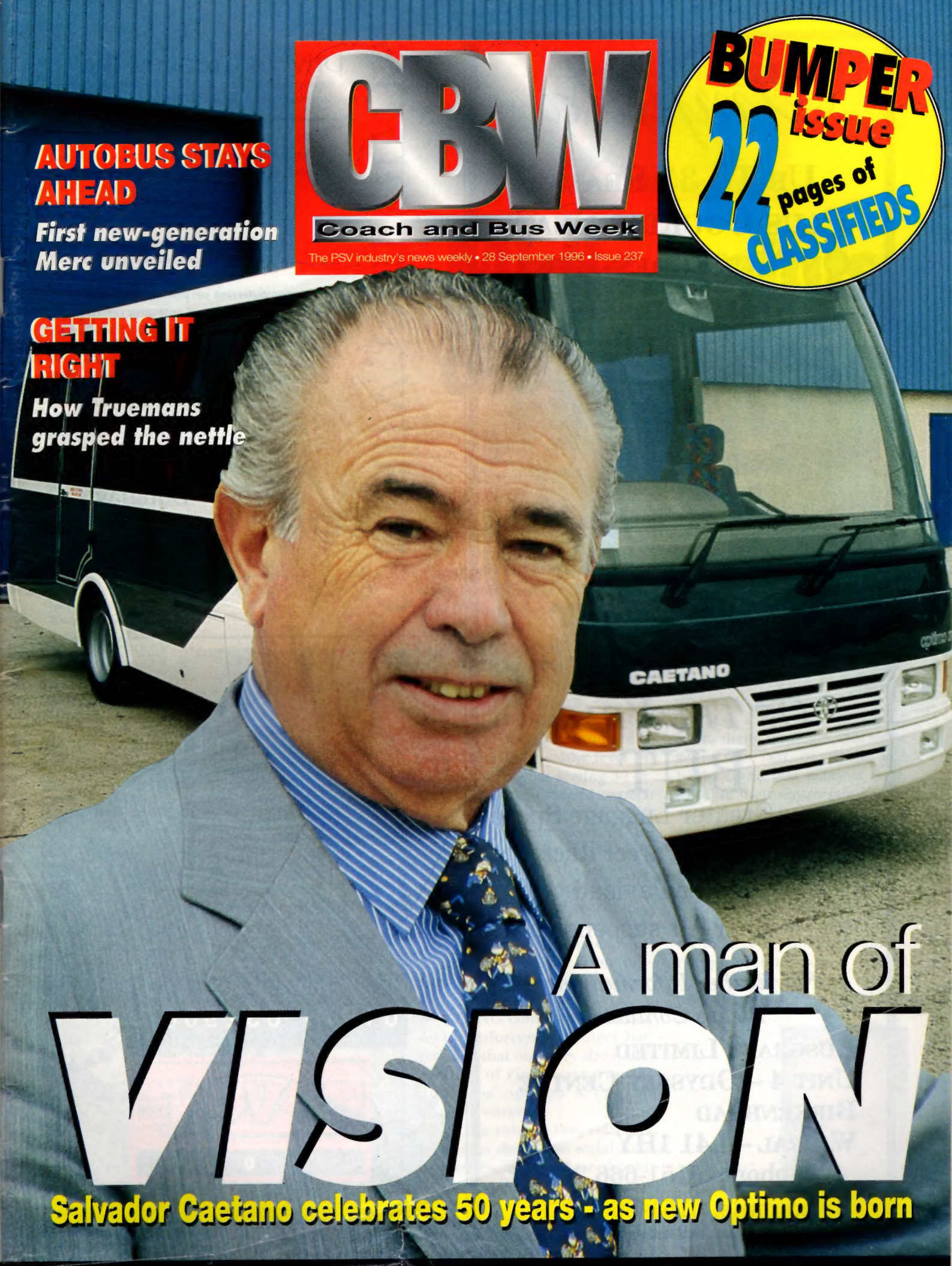

A man of VISION

Salvador Caetano celebrates 50 years - as new Optimo is born

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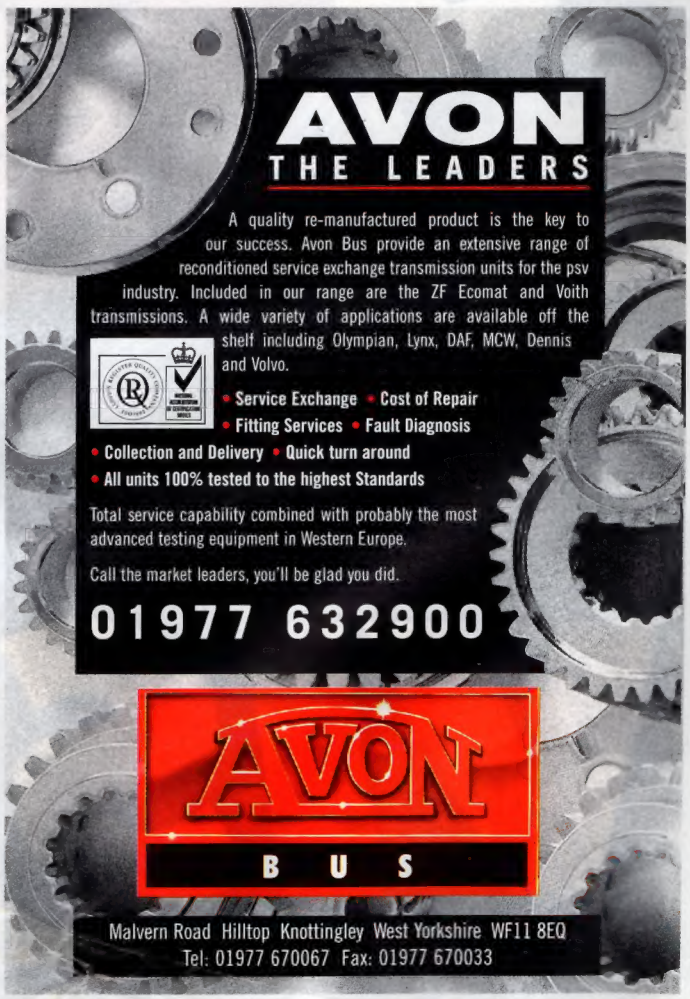

Coach and Bus Week is published by Emap Automotive, part of Emap Business Communications, Wentworth House, Wentworth Street, Peterborough PE1 1DS
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Fax: 01733 467002

Back issues 0181 956 3062

CBW is available only by pre-paid subscription
Annual subscription UK £49 per year
Annual Subscription Europe, Eire and Airmail £92
All rates include postage

Typesetting and origination: Goodfellow & Egan, Orton Southgate, Peterborough

Printing: William Gibbons, Wolverhampton

Contributions should be sent to The Editor, *Coach and Bus Week*, Wentworth House, Wentworth Street, Peterborough PE1 1DS

The editor cannot accept responsibility for claims and statements by authors and manufacturers whose views do not necessarily represent those of the publisher, or for any mistakes or misprints, although every care is taken to ensure accuracy

ISSN 1351-3877
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CBW Coach and Bus Week

Midis, minis and Maltese

CONGRATULATIONS to Caetano, Toyota, Mercedes-Benz and Autobus Classique who between them bring us two, new midi-coaches.

Optimo and Nouvelle have, of course, been with us for a while but it's refreshing to learn that changes of underframe have been seized as opportunities for the bodywork to go back to the drawing board as well. The two market-leading midis are already established, but the redesign of both should also make them more sophisticated.

Given the healthy level of interest in coaches seating 30 or thereabouts, one would expect more of the major manufacturers to be in the market with rear-engined vehicles which satisfy not only the seating capacity but the price ceiling... about £80,000 by our reckoning. There's nothing wrong with front-engined coaches, of course, but there are some die-hard traditionalists out there...

● A LONG conversation with a senior enforcement officer has revealed that our story about the running of eight-seaters on O-discs has opened a can of writhing worms.

"The rules as they relate to minibuses should be withdrawn in their entirety, and we should start again," he told one of our journalists. "The whole situation is a mess."

His particular concern was that voluntary groups and schools escape almost all of the current legislation, and that some operators know how to dodge it. If the result were merely that they rob commercial operators of some profit, no problem, but his worry is that by doing so, they also fall through the net of safety legislation.

● SO Malta's veteran bus fleet, to which enthusiasts have flocked for years, is to be gradually replaced by low-floors.

Let's not get too weepy about them; we doubt that we've seen the last of these old battlers, and that many of them will find their way to safe havens such as preservationists' fleets and museums. We suspect there's also a market for them as operational tools, just as long as the operator in question has the facility to make his own spares!

Go to Malta and take a ride on an Excel, and then something ancient for a direct contrast. You'll discover that nostalgia ain't what it used to be...

Mike Morgan
Editor

events

1-3 October: Expocoach, Hall 3, NEC, Birmingham. Contact show manager, Mark Griffin on 01926 888123, fax 01926 888004

15 October: Braking into the 21st Century, one-day conference by Don, Wabco and Rockwell Automotive at Telford Exhibition Centre. Details from Marie Barker on 01244 391391

15 October: Personal Security and Transport, Developing an Effective Strategy for Crime Prevention and Passenger Security on Public Transport, one-day conference at The London Marriott Hotel. Details from Helen Houseman on 0171 233 7600

16-17 October: Bus & Coach 96, Institution of Mechanical Engineers conference, IMechE HQ, 1 Birdcage Walk, London SW1. Details from Philip George on 0171 973 1316, fax 0171 222 9881, E-Mail: P- GEORGE@IMECHE.ORG.UK

17 October: Buses Worldwide meeting, Fred Tallent Hall, Drummond Street, London NW1. Details from Ian Johnston, 3 Cypress Drive, Fleet, Hants, GU13 9HE

21-22 October: CPT annual conference, The Park Hotel, Cardiff. Details on 0171 831 7546/fax 0171 242 0053

21-24 October: Mitcar, Paris, Porte de Versailles, details on 00 33 1 41 29 97 27 fax 00 33 1 41 29 96 68

23-27 October: Autobus Rai 96, MECC, Maastricht, Holland. Details, tel 00 31 20 549 1212/fax 00 31 20 646 4469

5-7 November: GNSS 96 — Global Navigation Satellite Systems Conference, The Church House Conference Centre, Dean's Yard, Westminster, London SW1P 3NZ. Details from The Director tel 0171 589 5021/fax 0171 823 8671

5-10 November: Bus 101, Hallen, Kortrijk, Belgium. Details from Mieke Glorieux, Bus 101, Motestraat 41, B-8800 Roeselare, Belgium, tel 00 32 51 22 60 60/fax 00 32 51 22 92 73

14 November: CTA's annual exhibition, Norbreck Castle Hotel, Blackpool. Details from Maggie McCoy on 0161 366 6685

14-16 November: Minibus and Accessible Transport Exhibition, Norbreck Castle Hotel, Blackpool. Details, tel or fax, on 0161 351 1475 or 0161 366 6685

19 November: Trans-Expo 96, Canada's transit and bus exhibition, Vancouver Trade and Convention Centre, Vancouver, Canada. Details on (416) 365-9800, ext 116, fax (416) 365-1295

23 November: ***CBW*** **Coach Industry Awards, Purbeck Hall, Bournemouth. Book your tables now. Details on 01733 467157**

Luggage carriers drafted in as response to tour customers' requests

▼ Coach

Vehicles keep WA afloat

LATEST fleet additions for Wallace Arnold are all-electric and secondhand - but it's not a major policy change!

The Leeds-based company has drafted in a fleet of luggage carriers - actually milk floats - to serve its tour customers in the UK. They will transfer luggage at Wallace Arnold's main interchanges in the UK.

"Believe it or not, they came from a guy who had a warehouse full of them," said operations director Steven Barber. "The PVR is much lower than 10, but we have no operational experience of milk floats, so we have plenty of spares in case they break down."

The vehicles were bought after a survey revealed that luggage transfer was high on passengers' lists of pet hates.

▼ Coach and Bus

Lib-Dems learn about industry

A STAND at the Liberal Democrats' annual conference will promote the coach, bus and light rail industries.

The Confederation of Passenger Transport now has a policy of attending the party conferences, at which it has prepared special material to explain the problems the industry faces in areas such as the outside lane ban, fuel duty rebate and public transport infrastructure.

"Although CPT is in close contact with senior politicians from all parties on a frequent basis, these conferences give us a chance to get the industry's message across to a wider audience," said CPT director general Veronica Palmer.

The material produced for the conferences is being made available to members campaigning on a local level.

▼ Coach

Sales drive brings two top posts

SALVADOR Caetano UK has made two senior appointments as its drive for sales increases.

New service manager at Caetano, in Coalville, Leicestershire, is former Dennis Specialist Vehicles man Mike Bishop. Mr Bishop will have responsibility for all after-sales activity, including workshops, spares and product development.

Tony Walton joins Caetano as sales executive after a spell selling Mercedes-Benz-based minibuses. Mr Walton's sales area will include Scotland and the North of England.

■ **Salvador Caetano celebrates 50 years see pages 40-45**

▼ Coach and Bus

Sky(

SCOTTISH Citylink has taken a 25 per cent strategic stake in Skye-ways Travel as it cements its long relationship with the Highland coach and bus company.

The National Express subsidiary last year bought a similar stake in West Coast Motors, based at Campbeltown in Argyllshire, setting a precedent within the normally strict, arm-length relationship NatEx has with its service suppliers.

But Citylink md Alastair MacPherson says the investment is essential for further development of business in the north of Scotland, where communi-

▼ Bus

MAIDSTONE Borough Council is the latest authority to 'go green' with

▼ Coach

Laguna

BRISTOL Crown Court has heard evidence that driver Steven Brown may have lost concentration before his coach crashed through barriers and into a culvert on the M4, resulting in the deaths of 13 members the the Royal British Legion.

The Laguna Travel Volvo was returning to Bournemouth from a brewery day-trip in May 1995 when it overturned into a water-filled ditch near Bristol. Mr Brown is accused of a specimen charge of

e City-linked

NatEx subsidiary Skye-ways deal

by Mark Williams

ties are scattered and competition from other contractors is negligible.

"Companies like Skye-ways form the backbone of Scotland's rural services," he told *CBW*. "The underlying philosophy is based on the much greater overlap of local and long-distance services, and the need to co-ordinate with Caledonian MacBrayne ferry departures.

"At the time National Express acquired Scottish Citylink in '93, the services were provided by independents, and were not co-ordinated as we'd like. Our aim is to develop a complete network of rural services, similarly branded."

Mr McPherson said the formalisation of the relationship allows Citylink to provide support from National Express Group and give their managements a wider perspective. Citylink's gain is its insight into the close community relationships Kyle of Lochalsh-based Skye-ways has developed.

"The company knows the communities and their travel patterns," he said. "And it is important that our small stake leaves Skye-ways free to continue as an independent, family-run business."

Skye-ways md Alastair MacRae is equally pleased: "We can now push ahead with our development plans for the business. This is good news for the company, its staff, and for public transport services in the area."

Skye-ways runs nine of its fleet of 30 vehicles on Scottish Citylink diagrams.

ultra-low sulphur diesel. Its park-and-ride buses will be run on Greenergy

City Diesel, and three of the nine will also trial Eminox particulate traps.

MBC's part of the deal is to subsidise the extra cost of the fuel.

lriver 'lost concentration'

causing the death by dangerous driving of 76-year-old Kathleen Coombes, of Christchurch.

Alun Jenkins QC, prosecuting, told the court that there was no evidence of Mr Brown swerving or braking to avoid an obstacle on the carriageway, as had been suggested earlier.

"There was a long, gradual bend in the road. Instead of continuing to go round the contour of the bend, the coach just carried on straight," said Mr Jenkins. "It entered the hard shoulder, quietly moving over the rumble strips, and moving over the grass verge.

"It then entered an area where the verge became a shallow slope into a rhine or culvert. The coach tipped head-first into the culvert, which was encased in concrete. It was upside down and the culvert had a lot of water in it."

A passenger who was sitting alongside Mr Brown said the coach was hot despite the skylights being open. As the coach crossed the road towards the hard shoulder, she had thought of asking him to pull over, but the coach went through wooden fencing.

No evidence is to be presented that Mr Brown had drunk any alcohol or that there are any infringements of driving hours rules.

The case was still being heard as *Coach and Bus Week* went to press.

Trio destined for Cornwall's Goonhilly Down

▼ Bus

Stargazers buy Excel

BRITISH Telecom's visitor centre at Goonhilly Down in Cornwall, is taking three specially designed Optare Excels to work as observation buses on tours around the site, where the giant radio telescope is located.

Built to coach standards, the vehicles feature double-glazing with Callow and Maddox Urban 60 semi-coach seating. The first 10.7 metre vehicle has 34 seats, although six tip-up seats can make room for wheelchair users.

Equipped with a roof light, video monitors and a PA sound system, the buses will be staffed with on-board tour guides who will provide a running commentary with visual displays. Finished in the standard BT grey and silver livery, the Excel is rather euphemistically called the Earthstation, and will provide transportation on the mile and a half service within the site.

▼ Coach

DriveCare cuts down risk

SHEARINGS has cut costs, improved the company's image and consequently increased passenger numbers, during its first six months experience with the DriveCare system.

However, managing director, John Slatcher says that around 30 per cent of the calls prompted by the DriveCare safety stickers on the back of all its coaches are complimentary.

Mr Slatcher said: "In one particular case, an incident report helped us to identify a potential vehicle problem, while others have enabled us to positively debrief the driver to gain a better understanding of the types of driver behaviour which can lead to accidents.

"Interestingly, some of the reports reveal a lack of public understanding with regard to the road space required by the average coach particularly at roundabouts. Further analysis for the first six months of the scheme's implementation has allowed us to identify those drivers who would benefit from additional training in defensive driving."

▼ Coach

Rare coach goes missing

A DISTINCTIVE Plaxton Paramount 3500 on Mercedes-Benz 0303 - one of only a handful made - has been taken from Yarranton Brothers of Tenbury Wells, in Hereford.

The white, orange and green coach, G474 BJU, disappeared last Monday, 23 September and was possibly spotted on its way to the M5, says operations director Mark Yarranton. It is one of a batch of five bought new by Wallace Arnold, and still has their moquette.

CBW

In brief

Reward offer

BRADFORD Traveller has put up a reward to help catch a man who assaulted a bus driver and threatened him with a screwdriver. The driver is considering leaving his job as a result of the assault.

Hump problem

A BUS driver whose routes take him over more than 900 road humps a week is claiming he has back problems as a result. His employers, Pennine Buses, say humps also damage vehicles.

Hero driver

CROPLEYS Coaches driver Maurice Brader was praised after prompt action helped them get off his vehicle before it went up in smoke. Mr Brader evacuated the passengers then tried unsuccessfully to tackle the blaze. Cropleys offered to refund the tour price, but passengers voted to enjoy the rest of their Lakeland tour.

▼ Bus

Optares oust Malta's oldies

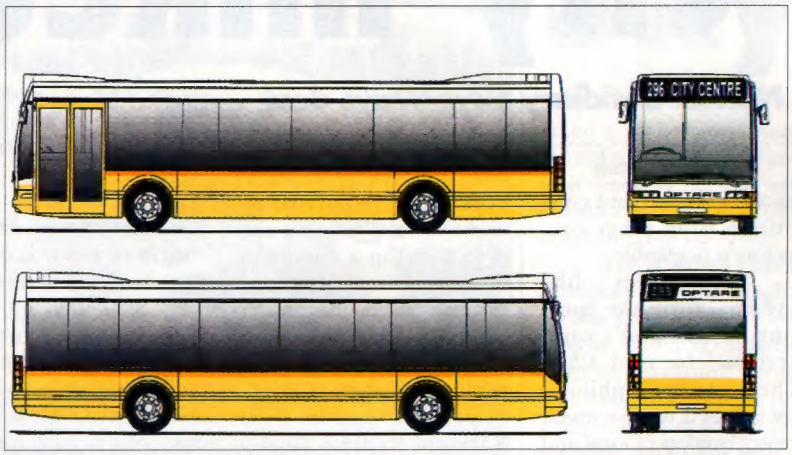
First low-floors

by Andrew Jarosz

LEEDS-based bus manufacturer Optare has secured its first bus orders for Malta, where the Island's Government has decreed that many of the historic buses that are a tourist attraction in their own right, have to be replaced with ultra-modern low-floor buses.

An Excel city bus, specially modified for the local climate is being marketed by a new joint venture company Optare (Malta) Ltd, formed between Optare (UK) and two leading local companies - Alpine Holdings, a Maltese conglomerate and the Zammit Group, a long established General Motors distributor with excellent workshop facilities.

Having gained accreditation as an approved supplier from the island's public transport authority, the new company has secured its first order for 10.6 metre Excels from Chancu Supreme Travel of Xejtun.



Optare's artist impression of the new Excel buses for Malta

The first single decker, which is now being built, features a 215 bhp engine, automatic transmission, half-depth sliding windows, but no interior heating. Some shortening at both front and rear is taking place, but otherwise, the specification will be identical to UK spec, with 45 seats and wheelchair access.

The principal objective of the island's public transport authority is a radical modernisation of local transport which involves the gradual replacement of over 500 service buses.

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In brief

Design award

LONDON Transport's bus station in Stratford, East London, has won a Civic Trust Design Award, presented by Newham councillor Shama Ahmed. The £2 million building was designed in-house by LT architect Soji Abass.

Young's guides

TRANSPORT secretary Sir Goerge Young has launched two guides aimed at improving transport information and travel for diabled people. *Door To Door* is a guide to using disabled transport, while a new database gives details of accessible transport schemes countrywide.

Darts launched

COUNTY Bus's three new low-floor Darts have been officially launched on Ware-Hertford routes by the mayors of both towns.

▼ Bus

Golden time for Wrights

by Mark Williams

ROBERT Wright of Ballymena's celebration of 50 years in business has been buoyed up with news of a £2.2 million expansion.

The Northern Ireland bus builder organised an open day for staff to mark its Golden Anniversary, and the good news is that it's a birthday party that is liable to get bigger!

Wrights will be taking on more than 100 new staff in the next three years, 47 of whom have already started work. The Industrial Development Board has made a £364,000 contribution to the cost of entending the factory.

Wrights' staff fun day celebrated 50 years of bus building

▼ Bus

Cash help to assess impact of bus laning

SIR George Young has pledged £20,500 for a six-month study into bus priority on Oxford's busy park-and-ride routes.

The cash aid will help assess the impact of permanent, enforced bus laning from the two park-and-ride sites into central Oxford.

The secretary of state for transport launched the six-month study during the Government's own 'National Bus Week'. Oxfordshire County Council chief trabsport planner Roger Williams said:

"This is a real endorsement of Oxford's pioneering park-and-ride system by the Government." CBW

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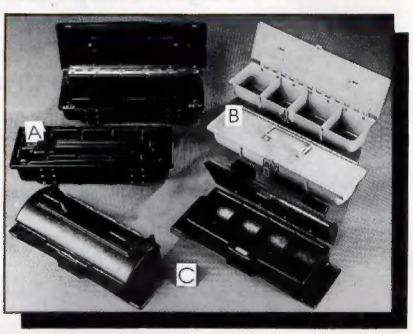

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COACH AND BUS WEEK
COACH INDUSTRY AWARDS 1996/7
IN ASSOCIATION WITH THE COACH TOURISM COUNCIL

▼ Coach

Big names for a big show

Roll call of top sponsors

by Mark Williams

SPONSORS for this year's Coach Industry Awards, to be held in Bournemouth on 23 November, read like a *Who's Who* of the coach industry.

The Coach Operator of the Year, whoever it is, will know Stena Line well. The ferry operator is active in the short-sea market but also has longer sailings, with significant Baltic business, so it's odds on anyone involved in coaching will have used its top-quality, innovative ferries.

The Coach Operator of the Year in Large Fleet Category will probably have stepped into sponsor Yeates' premises at one time or another. Like the eventual winner, here's a company which hasn't rested on its laurels and, under Bill Russell, is still forging new business.

The Medium Fleet Operator of the Year has the backing of Britain's most famous coach manufacturer, Plaxton, whose Premiere and Excalibur vehicles have a reputation for quality and good residual value.

Coach Driver of the Year will, in all likelihood, have parked up at some time outside the greatest theme park in Europe - Disneyland Paris. The immensely popular tour and short-break destination has never stopped improving facilities for drivers.

The Coach Manager of the Year is likely, at some time, to have had cause to thank Volvo, whose B10M chassis is the UK's market leader, and for good reason.

Best Fleet Livery is sponsored by insurers Belmont International, whose simple philosophy — based on claims experience — is that a smart fleet is a well-maintained and safe fleet.

Through its passenger insurance packages, Chapman Stevens has had plenty of contact with the tours market, which makes the Best Tour Programme category a natural for its sponsorship. And wholesalers hoping for the Wholesaler of the Year award will have Le Shuttle to thank, in part, for this accolade.

Bus and Coach Training, fondly referred to as BCT, knows more about training than virtually any other company, so its sponsorship of the Training Award is common sense.

And the Innovation Award is backed by one of the most innovative supply companies in the trade — Autoglass, whose high-tech, computer-organised central office has to be seen to be believed.

On the night, we'll all have Kirkby to thank for good cheer. The Plaxton-owned dealership will have provided that all-important thirst-quenching, pre-dinner drink.

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Spot the changes: Optimo IV looks the same but has a new power unit, and revised interior with wider seats

Optimised Optimo

Unveiled: latest version of the Caetano-bodied, Toyota-chassied 18 or 21-seat small coach

by Mike Morgan

TOYOTA has unveiled Optimo IV, the latest version of the Caetano-bodied midicoach. It has four-cylinder engine, revised interior and is built in a new factory.

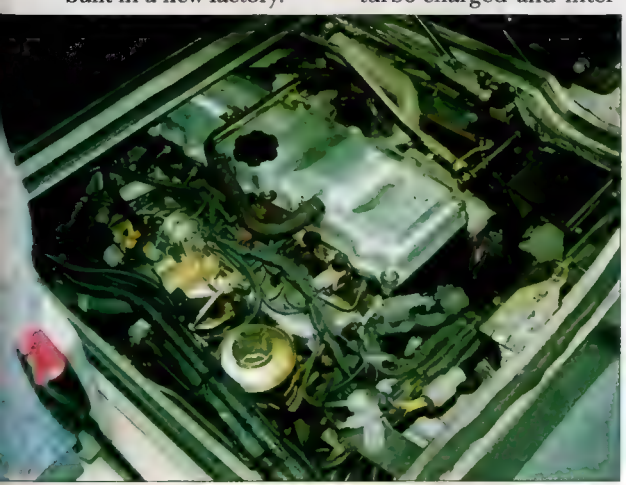
In turning from six to four cylinders, Toyota has revived a format used in the first-generation Optimo over 10 years ago but the new engine is turbo-charged and inter-cooled, giving similar power output to the unit it replaces.

The new model is an evolution of the award-winning small coach first introduced in 1985. It has wider seats, revised headlining, more spacious racks and much improved engine access.

However, the main change is forced by Euro 2 emissions limits which come into force on the opening day of Expocoach, 1 October.

Despite echoes of Optimo I the new power unit is a far cry from the under-powered engine which left those early 18-21 seaters panting on hills.

Power output on the Optimo IV is very similar to the six-cylinder unit it replaces but is notable for being lower-revving and Caetano claims its installation is better insulated. First drive of a prototype Optimo IV drive-line in an otherwise Optimo III-spec vehicle not only demonstrated that, performance-wise, it is difficult



The four-cylinder Euro 2 engine accessed...

...through a hinged hatch for daily checks

...optimised Optimo

Improved interior: wider seats and deeper racks provided

to differentiate between VI and III but a change of gearing drops the revs to 3,200 rpm at 70 mph, 2,800 rpm at 60 mph and there's plenty of torque from 1,400 rpm at 30 mph in top gear.

Yet there are no significant visual alterations. And maximum seating for UK market Optimos remains 21 with no alteration to length, width, or axle weights.

A wider 24-seat Optimo exhibited at European coach shows cannot be built for the UK because of the tilt test. Operators who had spotted the higher-capacity vehicle had hoped that it could be sold on the British market. When first launched in 1985, Optimos had naturally-aspirated four-cylinder engine and option of 18 or 21 coach seats in two-plus-one configuration.

Based on the World's top-selling PSV, Optimo starts life as a chassis kit manufactured in Japan by Toyota and shipped to Caetano's Ovar plant in northern Portugal.

Throughout the first 10 years of output the basic concept and production remained unchanged. After assembly on the line alongside Dyna light trucks and Hiace vans, the chassis moved to the Gaia body plant, where jig-built welded steel frame was constructed and the Optimo body assembled as a scaled-down version of the Algarve full-size coach. Criticism of low-power was overcome six years later with the first use of six-cylinder engine and Optimo II followed in October 1990 with revised body style. Two years later Optimo III hit the streets with the added benefit of cab door and lower window line.

The total UK sales figure is 790, with annual sales in recent years consistently hovering around 90.

Sales to other markets include Portugal, Spain and Germany. Nevertheless, top sales are

Now in its eleventh year of production, the O

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in the UK, with 99 in 1995, when 45 sold in Caetano's home market, 28 in Spain and 15 in Germany UK.

However, Optimo was given its own factory at the start of this year.

Bodybuilding is now completed in a dedicated 7,400 square metre plant opened at Ovar adjacent to the 22,275 square metre facility for Toyota assembly.

Optimo III production transferred in January as preparations were under way for its successor.

The first Optimo IV has now left Ovar and mainstream output is expected to start in the new year. Operators buying the new coach benefit from better access to the lower emission Euro 2 engine.

Maintenance of the front-mounted radiator is through a detachable front panel and the engine cover is hinged with a quick release bonnet catch, making daily checks much easier.

Passenger comfort is improved with one inch wider Fiansa-built and Caetano-covered seats, while the saloon environment has an updated look, with concave moquette-covered roof centre panel. Integral fresh air ducting gives the racks greater capacity but deletes the distinctive wood edging. CBW

imo has been given its own dedicated factory

First Optimo IV is ready but mainstream build starts in 1997

SPECIFICATION

Dimensions

Wheelbase:	3935 mm
Overall Length:	7535 mm
Overall Width:	2120 mm
Overall Height:	2650 mm
Turning Circle:	14,400 mm

Weights

Unladen:	4250 kg
Gross Vehicle:	6,300kg

Engine

Type: Four-cylinder Toyota 15 B-FT diesel turbocharged and intercooled
Capacity: 4104cc
Power: 134 bhp at 3,000 rpm
Torque: 265 Lbf ft @ 1,600-2,400 rpm

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'Nouvelle' Nouvelle: the new Mercedes-Benz T2W chassis cowl prompted Autobus' Classique's extensive redesign

▼ Coach

Beauty is not just skin deep

Midicoach of the year gets pace-setting underframe

by Mark Williams

THE prototype of the award-winning Nouvelle midicoach on Mercedes-Benz' T2W 'Vario' has been unveiled exclusively for *Coach and Bus Week*.

Autobus Classique's coach gets a new front and interior... but beneath the skin is a radical if invisible transformation as Mercedes-Benz sets its sights well beyond the millenium with a pace-setting Euro 2 engine and its first light, air-sprung chassis.

The Nouvelle will be on show at next week's Expocoach show, painted in a stunning livery of Camargue horses. But *CBW* was on hand as it quite literally left the gloom of the factory floor for the first time.

Its new front has smoothed out many of the angles of the now-familiar Mercedes-Benz 814D, and with a deep spoiler with the Autobus' name emblazoned across it, together with stylish Sprinter headlamps, it has a very modern appearence. It should, because the styling and design is the work of post-graduate Chris Sumner, who joined Autobus this year aged 22.

He decided to retain the Merc windscreen, despite the urge to produce a special, full-depth screen, on the grounds that operators would find the price of replacements prohibitive. A smoked-glass panel above it helps give the impression of full windscreen depth.

The fluted locker doors are now complimented by similar sculpture on the front. In the production version, the indicator cluster is likely to be a strip indicator above the headlamp, and the headlamp itself a Sprinter glass with adjustable, original Merc reflector.

The interior has been re-engineered to retain the same body height despite the reduction of 85 mm in chassis height. Autobus Classique has opted for a sunken aisle (uncarpeted at the time we saw it) between raised seating, which by avoiding having to lift the seats over wheel arches also gives a small but critical amount of extra legroom.

On the prototype, a new Holdsworth-designed moquette has been used on Fainsa seats which are bolted directly through the raised steel floor pan. Equipped with three-point inertia belts, they meet M2. Elsewhere, Nouvelle is much as we have already seen, with the original and tough luggage rack system which carries air ducting and lighting.

The obvious evidence of the new Vario chassis-cowl is the dashboard and instrument layout. The entire unit is flush-glazed to avoid any dust traps, and the parking brake has been usefully resited to the right of the instrument cluster. But beneath the interior engine cowl is the heart of Mercedes-Benz' new 0814D chassis - a completely new 900-series, 4.25-litre engine which the German manufacturer aims to take to Euro 3 and beyond.

It's a 12-valve, four cylinder engine, turbocharged and intercooled

Front spoiler, new grille and bonnet part of Chris Sumner's work

Continued on page 18

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On target for growth

Alan White: 'shouldn't cost much more to buy'

to produce an almost flat torque curve, delivering 520Nm from 1,000rpm onwards, and 136 bhp(PS) at 2,300 rpm. Electronically managed, it has full computer-linked analysis.

It can be married to the standard, ZF 5S 42 five-speed gearbox, a soon-to-arrive Mercedes-Benz G60 six-speed box or Allison's AT 542 automatic transmission.

The coach variant supplied to Autobus has rear air suspension and a steel-sprung front. Bus variants will be steel-sprung all round. Disc braking is provided on every wheel, and ABS will be an option. Mercedes-Benz is also looking at importing an engine with 'throttle brake' - a fourth valve fitted in the head which provides retardation in a similar way to an exhaust brake. It's much lighter than an electro-magnetic retarder and, at no more than £400, much cheaper.

THE original Nouvelle, which won the 1995 Midi-coach of the Year Award at the Coach Industry Awards, has sold well... but Autobus Classique sales director Alan White says the new version will sell better.

During the twelve months to early August this year, 58 Nouvelles have left the factory doors, but the T2W 'Vario' version is targeted to sell at least 70 in its first year.

"We lost 15 further deals for Nouvelle last year because we were so close to capacity," said Mr White. "Nonetheless, our top dealer, Hughes DAF, sold 17 coaches on its own, and I expect the sales message for this version to be much stronger. I suspect demand will exceeed our targets."

The recommended configuration to make the most of available space is for around 24 seats with a very high specification. Mac~Hispacold is looking at air-conditioning options, with the cool favourite being rack-mounted fan units with one locker to contain condensers.

"The good news is that it isn't looking like costing much more than the existing product - I'm looking at a price range of

Continued on page 20

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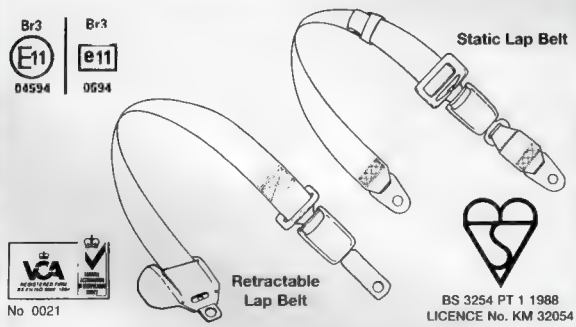

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Sunken aisle a new feature

between £75,000 and £85,000 depending on specification," said Mr White. The first flush of Vario Nouvelles will be leaving the factory from October onwards, but the first full-scale production run will start in January '97.

Mercedes-Benz' bus and coach account manager Ian Soden is confident that the chassis will do some of the selling for itself.

"This isn't a truck-derived chassis cowl. The bus and coach market is very important to us, and we managed to persuade Germany to produce the Vario for the PSV market first - the truck dealers will have to wait six months," said Mr Soden.

The chassis's predecessor sold 10,000 units in ten years, more than 80 per cent of which were for bus. Uptake from the major operators has been an endorsement of its quality.

The very special news from Mercedes-Benz' fleet special products manager Liam Ilbury is that ABS - to be offered only as an option in deference to the bus market - will come free on the first batch of Varios.

"Odd as it seems, bus operators don't want ABS, though the Germans view it as an essential safety feature," said Mr Ilbury. "So the right-hand drive version is actually de-specified for Britain."

Mr Ilbury's second surprise for operators is that the result of his company engineering a new engine for Euro 2 is that economy is improved around 6 per cent, which should give the Vario a 25mpg peak performance. CBW

Three-point belts on M2 seats are top-spec

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1994 L DAF KS3000 Easishift Van Hool Alizee 'H', 51R/Toilet
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1994 L DAF HS2700 Auto Van Hool Alizee 'H', 51R/Toilet
1994 L MB230LT Auto Van Hool Alizee 'H', 51R/Toilet
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1993 K DAF SB3000 Van Hool Alizee 'DH', 51R/Toilet
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1993 K DAF SB3000 Auto Van Hool Alizee 'H', 51R/Toilet
1993 K DAF SM230LT Van Hool Alizee 'H', 51R Toilet
1992 J DAF SB2305 Duple 340, 57R
1992 J DAF SB3000 Van Hool Alizee 'DH', 51R Toilet
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1990 G MB230LB Van Hool Alizee 'SH', 53R/Toilet
1990 G MB230LB Van Hool Alizee 'H'
1990 G DAF SB3000 Van Hool 'H', 49/Toilet
1989 F DAF SB2305 Van Hool Alizee 'DH', 53R
1989 F DAF SB2305 Van Hool Alizee 'DH' 51R/Toilet
1989 F DAF MB230LT Plaxton 3500, 51r/Toilet
1989 F DAF MB230LB Plaxton 3500 , 52R
1989 F DAF MB 230LB Plaxton, 51R/Toilet
1988 E DAF SB2300 Van Hool Alizee, 51R/Toilet
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1990 G VOLVO B10M Plaxton 3500, 49R/Toilet
1990 G DAF DHTD Duple 320, 57R
1989 G SCANIA K113 Van Hool Alizee 'SH', 49R/Toilet
1989 F DAF MB230 Van Hool Alizee 'SH', 53R/Toilet
1989 PP BOVA FUTURA FHD, 49R/Toilet
1989 SB3000 Plaxton 3500, 51/Toilet
1988 VOLVO B10M, Plaxton 3500, 49R/Toilet
1988 PP BOVA FUTURA FHD, 49R/Toilet
1988 E DAF SB3000 Van Hool Alizee 'DH', 51R Toilet
1988 E SB3000 Van Hool Alizee SH 49R/Toilet
1987 E SB2300 Palxton 3200, 55R, air conditioned
1987 E DAF SB2300 Plaxton 3500, 53R, air conditioned
1987 D DAF 2300 Van Hool Alizee 'H', 49R/Toilet
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▼ Maintenance

Sunderland must wait

SUNDERLAND & District Omnibus Co Ltd has to wait to see what action is to be taken against its O-licence, in view of its maintenance record. The company, of 117 Queen Street, Gateshead, Tyne & Wear, had been called before North Eastern deputy traffic commissioner Brian Horner at a Leeds disciplinary inquiry.

Vehicle examiner Gary Walker said he carried out a maintenance investigation in July due to the high level of prohibition notices issued to the company's vehicles. He examined 11 vehicles, issuing one delayed prohibition and eight defect notices. Over the past five years there had been 76 prohibitions issued. The initial pass rate at annual test was 100 per cent. Inspections were carried out at three-weekly intervals.

At the Philadelphia operating centre the brake percentages were not recorded on the inspection sheets. There were driver-defect reporting systems available at all three depots but some of the defects found showed the system was ineffective.

Sunderland & District trades as Wear Buses

The facilities were good at all three depots. All the annual test work was carried out at the Philadelphia depot, leaving only two fitters available for the fleet of 60 vehicles. The staffing levels at the other two depots were satisfactory. Some of the defects found had previously been noted by the company when the vehicle concerned was inspected. Some were so obvious that they should have been noted and reported by the drivers.

Mr Horner said it seemed vehicles were allowed to keep running with defects which had already been identified, which then deteriorated resulting in a prohibition notice. The majority of prohibitions were for only one item.

For the company, Geoffrey Jones said it was part of the Go Ahead Group North East Ltd. Up until 1993 maintenance was carried out by Go Ahead North Engineering. Since 1993 maintenance has been carried out at the three depots.

Philadelphia had a total of 67 vehicles. The average age of the fleet was 9.8 years old. The fitting staff had been increased and their duty hours rearranged so there were fitters on duty from 5am to 9pm.

At the Sunderland depot there was a total of 66 vehicles, with the average age of the fleet being 7.2 years. At the Washington depot there was a total of 47 vehicles, with an average age of 8.7 years.

Emergency hammers were a constant problem, as they went missing to be used to smash car windows, said Mr Jones. The effectiveness of the daily driver defect reporting tended to be variable. There was a need for constant supervision and for a close liaison between the traffic and the engineering departments. There was to be a training programme. Constant monitoring was to be carried out, to make sure all drivers were handing defect reports in daily. Random checks would also be carried out by the supervisor to ensure drivers were checking vehicles properly and reporting defects.

Asked what had gone wrong, Mr Jones said there had been a failure to step back and look at the whole picture. The depth and quality of the training was not good enough. Additional staff had been employed and there was now a better spread of hours.

Kevin Carr, director and general manager north of Coastline, VFM and Sunderland & District, said the increase in staff and training should stem the flow of prohibitions sooner rather than later.

When a prohibition was issued the quality and control department investigated it to see whether it was an individual problem or whether it had wider implications. Smoke meters were used at every inspection and braking efficiency percentages were now recorded. The drivers' awareness had increased over their own daily inspection of their buses.

Mr Horner said that, while a total of 76 prohibition notices was quite horrific, when they were broken down there had been an improvement. However, there was no room for complacency. There had been a few prohibitions for braking and steering-related defects.

Paul Matthew, managing director of Go Ahead Group North East, said there was total commitment that all the fleet should meet the standards laid down by the DoT. He was confident the new measures would deliver the required results. There were no budget restrictions at all in relation to vehicle maintenance.

Mr Horner is to announce his decision in writing at a future date.

▼ Operation

Operator is aiding drive

Northumbria Motor Services in tr

by Michael Jewell

NORTHUMBRIA Motor Services Ltd has been convicted of aiding and abetting three drivers to fail to carry an extract of the duty roster on a service between Newcastle upon Tyne and Carlisle. In a two-day trial before Carlisle magistrates the company was fined a total of £600 and ordered to pay £500 towards the costs of the prosecution.

Northumbria Motor Services Ltd, of 6 Portland Terrace, Jesmond, Newcastle upon Tyne, Tyne and Wear, and Western Scottish Omnibus Ltd, of Nursery Avenue, Kilmarnock, Strathclyde, were charged with aiding and abetting drivers to fail to carry an extract from the duty roster.

Three Northumbria Motor Service drivers, Paul Guthrie, of 54 Hugar Road, High Spen, Rolands Gill, Tyne & Wear; John Dean, of 45 Roman Way, Corbridge, Northumberland; and Peter Endacott, of 4 Kepwell Road, Western Avenue Estate, Prudhoe, Northumberland; and one Western Scottish driver, Alistair Carmichael, of 15 Kelwood Avenue, Dumfries, Dumfries and Galloway, each faced one charge of failing to carry an extract from the duty roster (*CBW*, 13 July).

Prosecuting for the Vehicle Inspectorate, Michael Fisher said the drivers had failed to carry an extract from the duty roster of the services concerned. In the case of Western Scottish, it involved a journey between Dumfries and Carlisle.

Under the EU rules a service timetable and a duty roster had to be drawn up by the operating company. It had to be signed by someone in authority, showing the name of the driver and the operating base, and schedule the periods of work for the current, preceding and following weeks. Each driver assigned to such a service had to carry an extract of the duty roster and the timetable with them.

Traffic examiners checked the four drivers at Carlisle Bus Station on 28 November. When interviewed, the drivers had all said they had copied their duties into their diaries. The prosecution was saying both routes were over 50 kilometres in length and, therefore, subject to the EU Regulations and that the two companies had failed to provide the drivers with an extract of the duty roster.

The drivers had all said they had copied their duties into their diaries

When interviewed, the representatives of the two companies had chosen to make no reply. "These companies have chosen to use a device to try to avoid the application of these regulations," said Mr Fisher.

DoT traffic examiner Mark Goodwin said that, when interviewed, Mr Endacott said he had been driving the Newcastle route for six years and had never been told by Northumbria to carry anything relating to records.

DoT traffic examiner Keith Smith said Mr Guthrie had said they did it from a diary and not a

fined £600 for rs without rosters

day trial but Western Scottish charges are dismissed

sheet. Mr Carmichael said he had copied an extract from the duty roster in the depot into his diary. The distance between Dumfries and Carlisle was about 34 miles, which was over 50 kilometres.

He agreed with Christopher Hough, for the two companies, that, if a journey was less than 50 kilometres, it was covered by the domestic hours regulations, and that the Newcastle/Carlisle service was a stopping service which took $2^1/_2$ hours.

The magistrates dismissed the charges against Mr Carmichael and Western Scottish after Astra Emir, for the drivers, had argued there was no specific evidence to show the journey between Dumfries and Carlisle was over 50 kilometres.

She said the prosecution had to prove it was actually over 50 kilometres and, to do that, had to show where the journey started, the route it took and where it finished. There had been no such evidence.

Mr Endacott said the duty roster and the weekly duty sheet were kept in the paying-in room at Northumbria's Hexham depot. His practice was to copy his duties down in a diary, which he carried at all times. He also carried a module containing all the relevant information regarding the service he was on.

In reply to Mr Fisher, Mr Endacott said he wrote down the start and finishing times, the service he was on and the hours he would be paid for on that shift. He agreed he had not shown the diary to the traffic examiner but said he had told him it was there. He accepted that Carlisle to Newcastle was greater than 50 kilometres. He said he had not been given any daily rosters by the company to carry. He was provided with a service timetable by the company. Passengers could travel through from Newcastle to Carlisle and pay a through fare.

Mr Hough said that what should go into a duty roster was clearly laid down

He agreed he had not been given an extract of the roster by the company. He said he was instructed as part of his training to take a copy of his duties from the roster.

Similar evidence was given by the other two drivers. Mr Guthrie admitted his dairy did not show where he was based or the page with the details of his duties or his name.

Miss Emir said the issue was whether the diaries could be regarded as an extract. An extract did not have to be the whole duty roster. What the drivers had done was to copy out the bits of information that referred to them.

Mr Hough said that what should go into a duty roster was clearly laid down in Article 14, but the Article did not say what had to go into the extract. The diaries contained all the material information, showing the pattern of the periods of driving and the rest taken.

The only evidence against Northumbria was that it employed the three drivers. To prove that the company had aided and abetted the offences, the prosecution had to prove three things.

- Firstly, that the company knew that the drivers were not carrying an extract from the duty roster.
- Secondly, that there had been some positive act by way of encouragement or assistance with the intention of producing the commission of the offence.
- Thirdly, that any such positive act caused the driver to commit an offence. There was no direct evidence against the company proving any of those three elements.

Essentially, they were looking for an instruction to the drivers that they need

Northumbria MS is based at Jesmond, Newcastle

no carry a duty roster and there was no such evidence.

To show negligence was not enough. The obligations that the company had under Article 14 were to draw up a timetable and a duty roster.

The Article did not place a positive obligation on the company to ensure the driver was carrying anything. The Regulation did not state that the undertaking shall supply the driver with an extract of the duty roster. The obligation was placed on the driver to carry such an extract.

Mr Fisher said the extract must contain essentially what was in the duty roster. The diaries did not bear the driver's name nor his base. None of the drivers had been carrying an extract from the duty roster.

The court was entitled to infer the reason for that was they were not provided with those documents. It was strange they were all carrying timetables but not the duty roster.

The court was entitled to draw the inference that the drivers had been instructed not to carry a duty roster from the fact the company's representative had made no reply when questioned. The company had a duty to ensure its drivers were complying with the law and these drivers were not.

Where was a driver to get his service timetable and duty roster from, if not from his employer?

It could be inferred from the wording of the Regulation that the company had to provide those documents for the driver. When asked by the traffic examiners whether they were carrying a duty roster, the drivers had said that they were not. CBW

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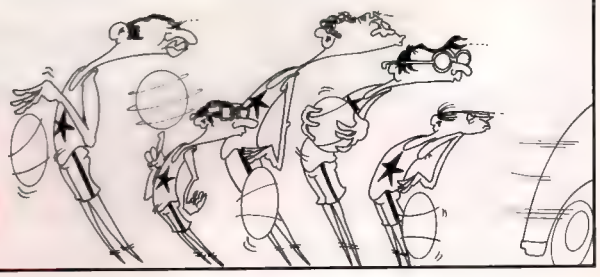

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▼ Europe

Stena's coach record

Superferry sets sails from Dover with 65 vehicles on board

by William Golden

ALL roads led to Dover when Stena Line turned its superferry, the Stena Empereur, into a Coach Special for a record sailing to Calais.

A total of 65 coaches was carried on the 29,000-tonne Stena Empereur, which is the largest superferry to operate on the short-sea route. It came into service in July, after an £8 million refit, and completed the reorganisation of Stena Line's short-sea fleet following the split with its former French partner, SNAT.

The Coach Special was organised by David Stamp, Stena Line's national sales manager-group contracts, and David Smith, the head of Dover Coach Services. Mr Stamp said it was a reflection of how much Stena Line valued its partners in the coach industry.

David Burdon, Stena Line's general sales manager, said: "This underlines Stena Line's confidence in, and commitment to, short-sea crossings. I am bullish about business to France; I am bullish about coach tourism, which is a vital part of our market; and I am bullish about the ferry business, despite any inroads that have been made into the market by Le Shuttle."

Port of call: the massed ranks of coaches line up to drive on to the Coach Special at Dover

Stena Line operates 29 return sailings daily between Dover and Calais and is the only operator on the Channel to offer a combination of fast and conventional craft.

CBW

Eurowatch

WEATHER

City	Average temperature last week	City	Average temperature last week
Amsterdam	13C/55F	Madrid	20C/68F
Athens	26C/79F	Oslo	17F/63F
Berlin	14C/57F	Paris	16C/61F
Brussels	13C/55F	Rome	17C/63F
Dublin	15C/59F	Stockholm	15C/59F
Lisbon	21C/70F	Vienna	11C/52F
Luxembourg	12C/54F	Zurich	9/48F

DIESEL PRICES

(Courtesy AA Roadwatch)

Country	Diesel price per litre in Sterling	Country	Diesel price per litre in Sterling
Austria	0.58	Luxembourg	0.44
Belgium	0.53	Netherlands	0.54
Eire	0.58	Norway	0.74
France	0.53	Portugal	0.47
Germany	0.52	Spain	0.47
Greece	0.43	Sweden	0,64
Italy	0.60	Switzerland	0.62

HOLIDAY POUND

Country	Currency exchange rate	Country	Currency exchange rate
Austria	16.05Sch/£	Italy	2,329 Lire/£
Belgium	46.92BFr/£	Netherlands	2.56 Gld/£
Denmark	8.82 K/£	Norway	9.82NKr/£
Eire	0.93 Punt/£	Portugal	234 Es/£
France	7.74 F/£	Spain	192 Pta/£
Germany	2.28DM/£	Sweden	10.16 SKr/£
Greece	366 D/£	Switzerland	1.88 SFr/£

Harry Shaw Travel had to cancel trips

▼ Europe

Pop goes coach tours

Fans miss out on Oasis concert in Paris

by William Golden

POP group Oasis has hit the wrong note with coach operators after they had to cancel bookings to the band's concert in Paris this weekend.

P&O European Ferries had more than 100 coaches booked to go to the concert which was called off in the wake of the much-publicised feud between Liam and Noel Gallagher, the band's singer and songwriter.

Robert Shaw, of Harry Shaw Travel, said: "We had a substantial number of coaches booked and we had no alternative but to cancel and give everybody refunds. It is one of the unforeseen hazards of operating in this market. We are subject to uncontrollable forces.

"I understand other operators decided to offer the trip as a Paris weekend but our customers only booked to see Oasis."

▼ UK

More groups urged to cast off on the Mersey Beat

MERSEY Ferries is pushing the boat out next year in a bid to attract more groups from across the UK aboard the original Ferry Cross the Mersey.

The Wallasey company is one of the major attractions in the north west and offers a 10 per cent discount to groups of 20 or more on all its services.

These include the 50-minute Heritage Cruise, trips to Seacombe Aquarium and special Summer cruises. The Heritage Cruise has attracted more than four million passengers since its introduction in 1990. Of these, 80 per cent have been from Merseyside.

Mersey Ferries is now targeting more groups from outside the area. Next year it is introducing a rest room for drivers in Woodside, where hot and cold drinks will be available.

Their passengers will be able to enjoy hot and cold meals in the licensed Woodside Ferry Restaurant, which has undergone a £150,000 refurbishment. Further improvements are planned for the Spring.

Andrea Ward, Mersey Ferries' new marketing executive, will be happy to help operators arrange group visits. She can be contacted on 0151 330 1453

■ Touring the north west - see this month's *Coach Tours & Excursions*

CBW

Darius solves cooler problems

WITH their comprehensive range of engineering services ***Darius*** provide a multi-disciplined approach to problem solving with in the coach and specialist vehicle industry.

Their workshop facilities in Alton, Hampshire, affords 3000 square feet of specialist engineering workshop space, with staff comfortably using their wide range of experience in the provision of engineering products and services to the requirements of ISO 9001.

A recent project was a specialised cool box for Bennetts Silverline of Newbury, Berks. MD, Dick Bennett needed a cool box to be installed at the back of the coach for travellers to keep their wine cool whilst on a recent trip to France. The end result was designed and built to look and function as if it had been installed when the coach was built.

Bespoke cool box designed for Bennetts Coaches

A midi coach built for a professional London Football Team by coachbuilders AutoBus Classique of Rotherham, South Yorks, was in need of a combined drinks console and cool box for the players to use. Space being at a premium, Alan White of AutoBus approached Darius for a solution.

MD, Duncan Goodacre, commented "the console was designed and built to fit under the front seat. One half keeping drinks cool with other dispensing hot water for tea and coffee."

With experience in design and installation of specialist vehicle equipment Darius are helping many clients with their engineering requirements.

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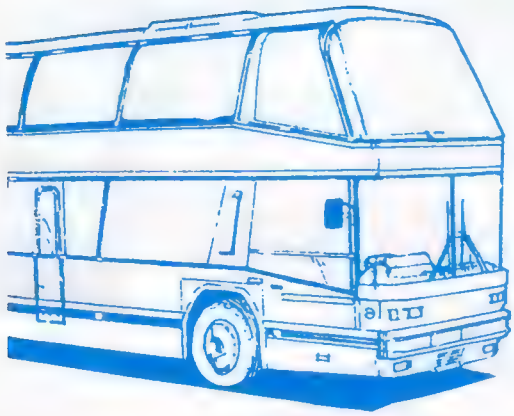

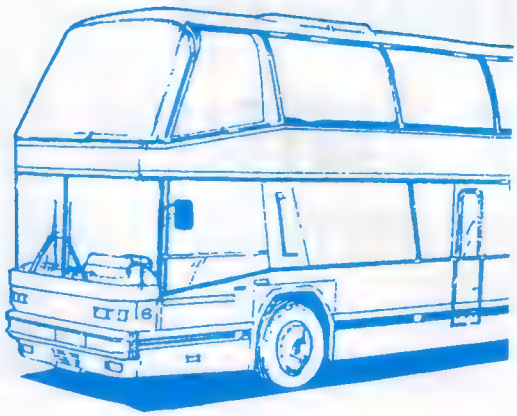

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Building for future

Coaching For Pleasure Day success

by William Golden

MORE than 1,000 people in 24 coaches converged on LEGOLAND Windsor, for the Coach Tourism Council's seventh Coaching For Pleasure Day.

The annual showcase for coach tourism attracted 22 operators from as far afield as Lancashire and Wales and gave them the chance to show their group organisers the theme park's attractions.

Chris Wales, CTC chairman, said: "LEGOLAND were very hospitable to organisers and CTC members alike, and did everything in their power to give us a great day. They even laid on blue skies and sunshine."

Denise Bridges, sales manager at the Windsor attraction, said: "We had an excellent feedback from group organisers. Most were first-time visitors so it was extremely useful to have the new introductions."

Cancer Relief Macmillan Fund, the CTC's nominated charity, also did well out of the day. A charity auction raised £1,300 and two operators organised their own fund-raising efforts. T4 Travel ran a Guess the Mileage competition and Ellen Smith Tours had a collection. CBW

Open day: coaches line up at Windsor

Teamwork: Chris Wales (left), CTC chairman; Joanna Oswin, LEGOLAND marketing manager; and Bob Montgomery, LEGOLAND md

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Time running out for Fred

IN the early days of bus deregulation I steadfastly refused to engage in fare wars with competitors and urged others to do likewise. Similarly, throughout many years of coach operation (as well as times beyond number in this column) I have counselled that prices have to more than cover costs - for otherwise there is no profit.

Pursuing these policies has served me well, but it should not be thought I believe fares and prices can just be pushed upwards and upwards without encountering customer resistance. Nothing is further from the truth. I have frequently suggested that many operators, often but not necessarily smaller ones, do little or nothing to actually market and sell the service they seek to provide.

Marketing and selling is something which is not picked up instinctively: it has to be learned. It is not something which is done naturally: it involves conscious effort. It is not something static: it is something which needs constant review. It is not something which can be ignored: it is one of the essentials for success.

This latter point was brought home to me recently when, at an informal gathering, operators were discussing why some coach companies were more successful than others. Although geographical location and the sort of work they did were significant factors, the over-riding one was this: all successful medium and large companies have a sales manager or sales director, while the small ones who do well have a person at the helm who is switched on to marketing and sales. Good engineers who become operators will turn out a fine fleet, and good drivers who become operators may look after passengers in an exemplary manner. But if no-one is concentrating on marketing the outfit and actually making sales, the prospects for real and lasting success are severely handicapped.

'Marketing is something which is not picked up instinctively: it has to be learned'

For smaller operators it may not be a full-time job, but designating a person to develop marketing and sales focuses their minds on achieving something, perhaps also by training and motivating others to have their eye on this particular target. There is, I am totally convinced, no investment which can guarantee such a good return, as spending money to ensure that an operation is well marketed and that sales staff seek out and recognise buying signals and then sell with all their might and main.

Sadly, some readers may not really understand what the last sentence is all about! They think that just giving a quote is selling and that placing an advertisement is marketing. Instead of going out driving of an evening, a few weeks at an evening class course could be a good idea. A trip to the library and reading up something

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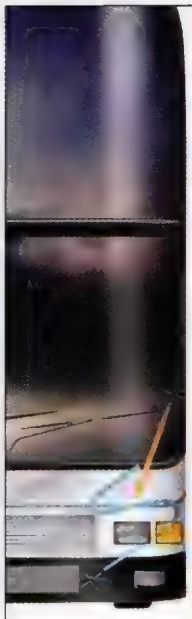

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WELCOME TO THE FUTURE

AXIAL

TOMORROW'S DESIGN .... NOW .... IN TODAY'S COACH

about marketing and selling might generate some ideas how to make it work in practice.

It is not only financially rewarding, it can be exciting, challenging and pleasurable. There is nothing that makes my heart sink so much as having a person booking a coach say: "I'll book it because you are the cheapest."

I feel convinced that I must have done the price calculation incorrectly. I feel peeved that the customer has not recognised quality, and I feel degraded by being at the bottom of the stack. Fortunately I am not subject to this humiliating experience very often, but those who are selling on price must be getting it all the time. In contrast, to win a sale when I know that I am not the cheapest, especially if I have had to wrestle to get it by spelling out the quality of service and standard of vehicle the customer will get, gives me a real zing. To get bookings where the customer says "we know that you will look after us properly" puts me on a high.

To secure a coach hire as a result of referral from another satisfied client makes it all seem very worthwhile. On top of all that these experiences give me, and the staff who experience the same things, the confidence to do it more and more, better and better, harder and harder. The effect is like riding on a rocket — there seems to be no limit to what you can achieve. How much more satisfactory this is than sliding down the slope of continual price and profit cutting, in the forlorn hope that it will create the urgently needed upturn — yet with the near certainty that quite the opposite is drawing nearer and nearer.

However, to get back to where I started, this does not mean that I seek to push prices ever upwards, or recommend that policy to others. The aim, when all is said and done, is not to increase prices, but to increase profits. That is achieved, to a large extent, by getting more people on services and getting better vehicle utilisation of coaches. In some cases these objectives, still with increased profits, can be made by actually lowering fares and prices. But not, I repeat not, ever, by indiscriminate and uncontrolled slashing. Again, this is where marketing comes in, aided by research, experiment and monitoring of effect. For there is no point in cutting prices if it does not attract new custom, and in sufficient volume to more than make up for the reductions given. As an example of this, I was interested to hear recently of a trial in which bus fares were almost halved, subject to passengers buying a multi-journey ticket.

'For too long Fred in the Shed has quoted one price for any particular destination, irrespective of day of travel, on a take it or leave it basis'

This resulted in such a substantial increase in ridership that revenue increased. As well as the tangible and immediate benefit of increasing revenue, this is creating a virtuous upward spiral: more riders may increase service frequency and may also increase awareness, and thus use, of other routes.

In coaching, for those who are prepared to market and sell mini-breaks, interest-based excursions, theatre and concert trips and 'themed' packages, the 'season' has become virtually all the year round. This may involve some trimming of prices during the Winter months, or spending out on something to give a package added value — and thus sales appeal. Here, too, if it enables annual revenue, net of operating costs, to rise, the resulting extra contribution to standing costs can only be welcome.

For standing costs are far greater than running costs and are there as sure as night follows day, even when vehicles stand in rows in the yard or garage — not moving for days or even weeks on end. As I have remarked before, the coach industry has been slow to adopt the sort of demand-related pricing that has long been the hallmark of successful holiday accommodation providers and other modes of transport.

Again, this is symptomatic of a lack of marketing and selling technique. For too long Fred in the Shed has quoted one price for any particular destination, irrespective of day of travel, on a take it or leave it basis. Time is running out for Fred. He is destined to stay in his Shed — his coaches with him — for very lengthy periods and eventually for ever, unless sound and sensible marketing and sales strategies are learned and put in to practice. CBW

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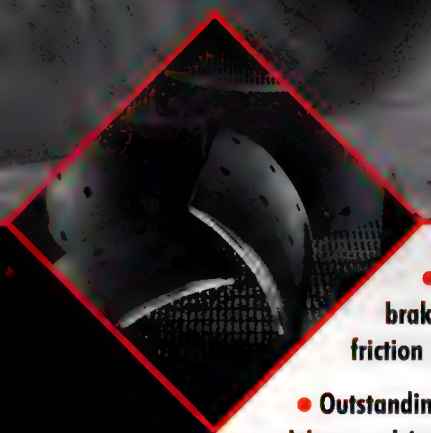

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Enjoying a break

JUST to prove that pictures are also wide open to misinterpretation, here is a posse of Alexander, Volvo and LRT senior staff enjoying a roadside break. Actually, they were 'launching' LRT's new deckers (see Deals and Dealers, this issue), but we're sure you get our drift...

Tanked up

THOUGH the US Blue Bird Corporation is best known for its export of school buses to the UK, via Coach Europe of Ratby, one of its motorhomes in a promotional video caught the imagination of our news editor. Its monster 400 bhp Detroit Diesel engine is fed from a 300-gallon fuel tank.

Simple answer to video noise

OPERATORS who wouldn't entertain the idea of video machines on their coaches are rapidly being marginalised.

In Bradford, there are now videos showing on the buses, and showing *On The Buses.* Yes, Reg Varney rides again, more's the pity. Youngsters are glued to the pop videos, also getting an airing on West Riding and Yorkshire Woollen services. Md Brian Jackson says the non-stop shows are a hit with passengers... to the extent that they miss their stops so they can catch the titles at the end. What's more, they cost nothing to run, as they are supplied complete with advertising by *The Original Passenger Picture Show.*

Of course, some people are bound to moan. "Turn Down Telly Sound Say Bus Passengers" roars the headline in the *Wrexham Evening Leader* way over in Crosville Wales territory, where the videos have also struck. Impossible, says the company. The volume is set automatically according to the background noise... loud when it's noisy, and quiet when the children get off. So, Margaret Colyer of Box Lane, we have the simple answer. MOAN MORE QUIETLY.

CBW

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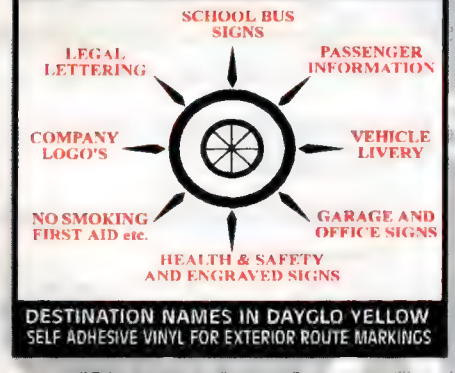

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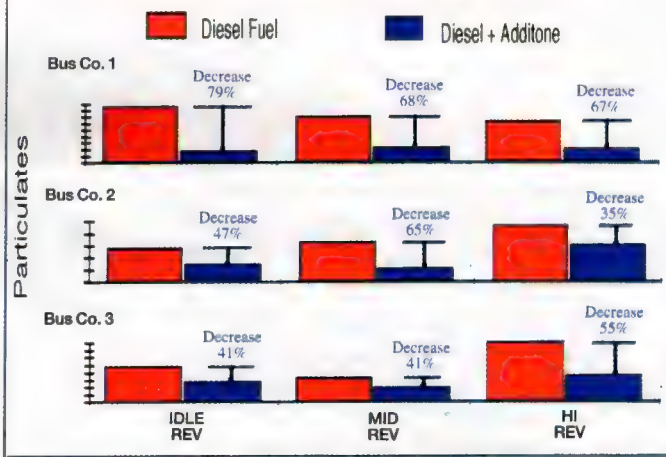

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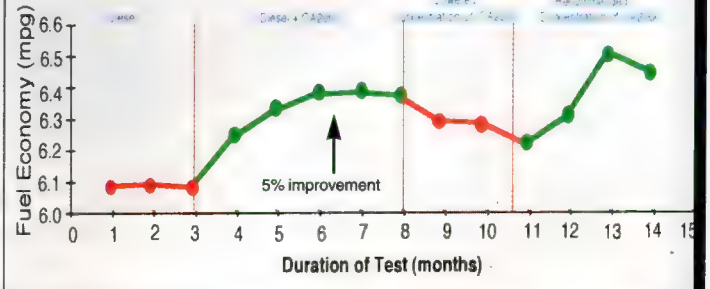

LETTER OF THE WEEK

Be adventurous with your next tender bids

From Tim Jennings

During all the recent debates about the fitment of seatbelts, little attention appears to have been given to the practicalities of supply and demand.

I would estimate that about 40 per cent of coaches used on school contracts are Plaxton Supremes, Duple Dominants and similar aged foreign bodies (I conducted a brief survey of an enthusiast's guide which lists all Gloucestershire independent operators — of 296 coaches shown, 142 were of the above types or older. While the book was 18 months old, I doubt that the ratio has changed significantly and is probably fairly representative of the country).

Many operators are saying it will be impossible to fit seatbelts to these older vehicles and I confess I have yet to see a satisfactory looking fitment on a Dominant seat; though many have been so fitted. However, if this is the case, it means that, by the 1998 seatbelt deadline, there could be a 40 per cent shortage of school coaches.

Even if all operators secured substantial increases in their contract prices to buy new vehicles, the manufacturing industry is no longer geared up for production of suitably large numbers of coaches.

The cheapest, new 57-seat coach is £100,000 — this equates to £126 per school day merely to pay for a five-year lease on the vehicle.

Probably the majority of used, post-1988 coaches available are high-floor executive vehicles, of little use where maximum capacity is normally now required. Where are our replacements to come from? There can be no easy solutions to the problems facing the industry. I would urge all operators to resist any councils trying to insist on seatbelts on bus-type vehicles, which would only compound the supply problems, and for you to be adventurous with your next tender bids!

Tim Jennings
Director
Somerbus Ltd
Poulton
Bristol

Write to: The Editor
Coach and Bus Week
EMAP Automotive Ltd
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Letter of the week wins a Corgi Classics model bus

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Editorial on target

From Clive Eglinton

Congratulations on your editorial (*CBW*, 24 August) which is exactly 'on target'.

Good business has to be about achieving a financially sensible return, not only for the capital involved in the coaches or buses utilised on school and local bus contracts, but to allow for long-term fleet replacement and to justify the amount of effort and energy going into the operation. Quality is the terminology of the nineties and many operators strive to deliver a quality service in difficult circumstances. Why should we have to accept the costs of pupil vandalism to vehicles when neither the education authority, parents nor school consider it appropriate to meet the cost of damage themselves?

I believe it is time to be selective in what we do and to charge a rate accordingly. If a known school or bus route produces damage to vehicles the rate should reflect the financial risks we as operators run. It has been said many times before the industry is its own worst enemy when it comes to securing better prices so let us at least try to use the outside pressures of the VI, parental pressure, seatbelt legislation 'et al' to drive rates up to a realistic level.

I have no doubt that most local authority transport planners are hard-working, dedicated people trying to achieve a lot with fewer financial resources available each year and it is only if operators refuse to supply services at unrealistic rates that the budgets will be increased to allow the investment our industry needs. We are all busy people and it is easy to overlook the need to step back and review our operations — it takes courage to break the cycle of lowering returns and it is good to be reminded from time to time with perceptive articles such as yours of the need to do so.

Clive Eglinton
Managing director
Chalkwell Coach Hire & Tours
Sittingbourne
Kent

Reasons for artics

From Richard Cranmer

I wish to put forward further reasons for Stagecoach's purchase of articulated coaches as opposed to double deckers.

Ron McCullock (*CBW*, 7 September) is partially correct in suggesting the reason is that less able people do not like having to climb stairs. This is not 100 per cent true, however, as no-one is forced to sit upstairs on a double decker, and there are 29 to 33 seats which can be reached via fewer steps on a double decker than on an Interurban-bodied Dennis Javelin coach. Indeed, on our Stagecoach Express services we have found many people prefer to sit upstairs, where they are afforded a better view.

The services that Ribble's four articulated coaches will be used on are currently operated by Dennis Javelin coaches, and extra capacity is required on these services at peak periods. To cater for this demand, we have a choice between double-deck DPs, double-deck coaches, or articulated coaches, each seating approximately 70 passengers.

Stagecoach is very conscious that Stagecoach Express is perceived as a coach operation, and not a bus one, and DP double deckers, although extensively used through necessity, do not have the quality image the company is trying to project. Thus, to maintain this image, double-deck coaches would have had to be purchased. The articulated coaches cost £200,000 whereas a double-deck coach would cost £250,000, a simple mathematical equation when like is compared with like.

Preston depot has been operating the first Plaxton artic since 1 August (101:P973 UBV) and we have had no problems, although Preston Bus Station tends to grind to a halt when it arrives! Plaxton was understandably annoyed that Jonckheere should have delivered its articulated coaches before Plaxton, and it is also interesting to note that these vehicles have rear windows in the trailers, while the rigid B10Ms in the same order have no rear window!

Richard Cranmer
Assistant operations manager - Preston
Stagecoach Ribble
Lancs

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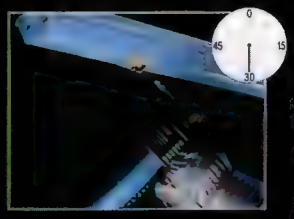

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Golden times

Now in its 50th year, coachbuilder Salvador Caetano has grown through diversification into one of Portugal's major employers. In an exclusive interview, Mike Morgan talks to the man who inspired the company's success

Salvador Caetano, 70: rags to riches

SALVADOR Caetano has the dignified confidence of someone who controls all that he surveys. As he sits in the palatial executive suite, it bears instant testimony to the phenomenal success of a man who left school at 10 and built an empire which employs 2,000 and has a turnover of £220 million.

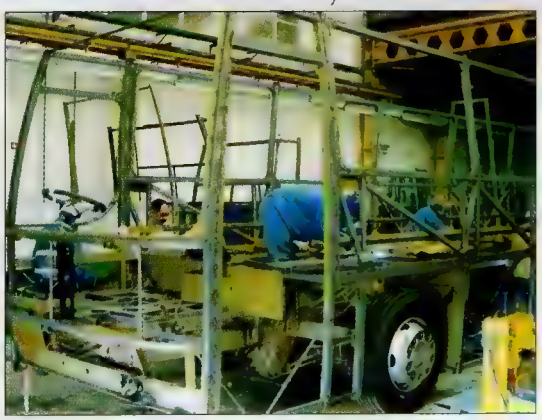
Yet the grand surroundings of plush leather, highly-polished wood and deep-pile rugs does little to conceal the struggles of the last 50 years.

Mr Caetano bears all the hallmarks of a man from a poor background who battled against the odds. It's a classic rags-to-riches story built on his passion for quality and advancement while retaining a deep belief in the value of a committed workforce.

His success brings instant respect. Born 70 years ago on the outskirts of Oporto in northern Portugal, Mr Caetano is one of nine children. He started work without being given the opportunity of a decent education. When 18 he started working for himself.

Portugal suffered badly during World War II but, in 1946, despite immense difficulties, he established the embryo of today's empire — Martins Caetano & Irmao.

He was just 20 but was driven by youth and dynamism combined with a strong determination to succeed and prosper. With evident pride he said: "There are now 50 companies in the group and I started from zero."



Coachbuilding is 10 per cent of turnover

He acknowledges the hurdles. Portugal is a small country with a population around one-fifth the size of the UK and a correspondingly smaller coach and bus sector. Consequently he had to look to other markets — the first was England in 1967.

Plaxton and Duple each produced over 1,000 coaches but Mr Caetano explains that historic links between the two countries gave him confidence to forge ahead. He said: "England was a good market and an open market."

Caetano bodies at that time were characterised by exotic styling and elaborate paint schemes. These features quickly gained favour among an otherwise conservative vehicle parc and the importer, the Moseley Group, capitalised on the image with its Moseley Continental branding. By 1984 Caetano sought to consolidate its market share through its own dealership in Northampton, moving to Heather in Leicestershire four years later.

A major landmark in the Caetano fortunes occurred the next year when a deal was signed with Toyota. This led to Caetano importing and selling Toyota cars, building light commercials, and the Japanese giant taking 27 per cent in the company. Further diversification has subsequently diminished the proportion of the coach and bus division's contribution to turnover and profit to just 10 per cent of the total.

Just as Mr Caetano has not lost sight of his roots — he has kept people in work through thick and thin and believes passionately in training as a way of helping those from disadvantaged backgrounds — he's not the first to find that coaches and buses have a special place in his business. The pride of continuous improvement in the on-going quest for improved quality and modernisation is amplified by the realities of economic life. Selling home-produced goods built by local craftsmen has a positive effect on the Portuguese balance of payments.

Back in the dark days of the 1974 Portuguese revolution his abilities were put to the test in a major way. Calling on all his powers of oratory his impassioned speech to the workers kept the factory working through a general strike. Proof that years of hard work and sacrifice have given Mr Caetano a resolve that is not easily shaken.

Mr Caetano could be excused for taking things easy.

But there are few signs of that happening even if he does spare a little more time for tennis and the theatre.

The company he created is every bit as vibrant and dynamic with the influence of its founder evident at every turn. Quality standards procedures are in place and mission statements adorn factory walls but they only serve to reinforce the Salvador Caetano vision which has endured for half a century: "Always improve quality and continue to modernise."

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UK is tops

Salvador Caetano's number one market for coach and bus sales

Teixeira: 'UK has a strategic role'

AS Salvador Caetano approaches its 30th anniversary in the UK, the importance of the decision to tackle the English market is reinforced.

Out of the 1995 output of 387 coaches and buses built in the company's Gaia plant, 151 were sold in the UK. This compares with just 59 in the Portuguese home market and 77 to the company's second most important market, Germany.

The UK's strat-egic position is further underlined by sales of 47 double deckers to Hong Kong and continuing orders from Bus Eireann for Volvo-chassied coaches. Both these markets are targeted through Salvador Caetano UK, the wholly-owned dealership which first opened its doors in 1984.

Abreu Teixeira, the director responsible for the coach and bus division and a long-serving Salvador Caetano employee, confirms the strategic importance of the UK as the company's number one market. Indeed the Algarve II body is a bespoke product with the Delta II adopted for all other countries.

Caetano's UK dealership, which includes an extensive repair facility and paint shop, took the view that Delta styling was inappropriate for this market and the Algarve's more restrained lines fitted better with a family theme covering the current product range — Optimo, MAN-based midi, and 12-metre coaches on Dennis, Volvo or MAN chassis.

Exceptions are the Porto dual-purpose body on Dennis Javelin and those vehicles sold through the UK to other markets.

Bus Eireann will have 77 Caetanos by year end

Bus Eireann business started three years ago with an order for 22 Algarves on Volvo B10M chassis. This was followed by 12 with a hybrid Delta/Algarve to meet the customer's needs for express-type coaches with in-swing door and large destination displays.

By the end of 1996 the Irish operator's Caetano fleet will have grown to 77 with the completion of an order for 43, including 20 with nearside centre door.

However, the Hong Kong business was a major departure, being high-capacity double deckers using Duple Metsec kits on Dennis Dragon chassis. Last year 47 Dragons out of an order for 30 12-metre with 133-passenger capacity and 20 10.3-metre with 115-passenger capacity were delivered and a further order for 30 is about to be started.

Meanwhile, one of the three production lines at the Gaia plant is fully occupied, completing the growing number of orders for the low-floor Cobus airport bus, large vehicles of a totally different type.

Sold by German company, Contrac, Cobus was launched in 1990. It is almost 14 metres long, three metres wide and can carry up to 140 passengers. Caetano builds the all-aluminium bodywork using the Alusuisse components supplied by Hess of Switzerland. The chassis modules are built by NAW, a Swiss-based Mercedes-Benz subsidiary and a 130 bhp Mercedes-Benz engine drives through Allison AT545 automatic gearbox to the front wheels.

Cobus has captured around 80 per cent of the airport market world-wide and the latest version has redesigned steel-framed streamlined front to give it a coach-like appearance. And, as output grows to three per week, Caetano has increased its stake in Contrac to 30 per cent.

Deckers for Hong Kong were a departure - 30 more are on their way

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A special celebration

Next year is 30th anniversary of Caetano in UK

Early import: 1978 Caetano B58

WHEREAS 1996 is a double celebration for Salvador Caetano in Portugal — the 70th birthday of its founder and 50 years since he started the business — next year is cause for a special celebration at Salvador Caetano UK, because 1997 marks the 30th anniversary.

Over the last 29 years the growing number of Caetano devotees has included Ron Bonas of Supreme Coaches, Coventry, and Whytes of Aberdeen.

Mr Bonas has made a biennial trip to the Heather-based supplier. His latest deliveries were two Algarves — one a 12-metre Javelin and the other an 8.5-metre MAN 11.190 midi-coach.

The two join the seven-vehicle fleet and are used on a variety of work for own tours, through contracts to private hire. "I've been a Caetano buyer from day one," said Mr Bonas. "They had problems at the start but I've found the firm to be excellent listeners... they come up with a good body at a reasonable price. The after-sales service is very good."

Algarve II standard since 1991 on Dennis, Volvo or MAN

Whytes 18-vehicle fleet was upgraded last Winter with four Caetano Algarve II-bodied Volvo B10Ms. They joined two other Algarves purchased a year earlier — though these were on DAF Bus SB3000WS and MAN 11.190 underframes.

Coincidentally, the oldest coach in Whytes fleet is a 1986 Algarve/Volvo but six of its 13 full-size coaches are now less than three years old.

Partner Ian Urquart explained why the company had spent a lot of money on new vehicles.

He said: "You've got to keep ahead otherwise the gap gets larger, and it also helps keep maintenance costs down." CBW

Salvador Caetano - Landmarks during 50 years of history

1946	Started with wooden-framed coaches
1952	Introduced composite wood/steel construction
1955	First in Portugal with all-steel technique
1965	Oliveira do Douro coach and bus building factory opened
1967	Export to English market begins
1968	Appointed exclusive distributor for Toyota in Portugal
1970	Integral Magirus Deutz buses manufactured
1971	Ovar assembly plant opened
1974	First exports to France
1984	Salvador Caetano UK set up
1986	First sales in Spain
1987	Finland added to list of export markets
1988	Exports start to Germany, Austria and Benelux
1990	Production of Cobus airport buses begins
1992	Cobus leads export drive into China as markets opened up in Mexico, Czechoslovakia, Iran, Oman, Egypt, Morocco, Cyprus, Turkey, Italy, Hungary and Singapore
1993	Training centre opened and 200,000th Toyota vehicle comes off the Ovar assembly line
1994	Additional export markets are: Israel and Ireland
1996	50th anniversary celebrations

Salvador Caetano - Some significant events

1967	First Caetano-bodied coaches imported by Ford agent, Willments
1968	Moseley Group appointed
1979	Alpha body introduced
1983	Algarve I launched
1984	Salvador Caetano UK set up in Northampton - md Doug Jack
1985	Optimo I unveiled
1986	Oscar Walker and Harry Beardsmore become joint mds
1987	Six-cylinder engine fitted to Optimo I
1988	Move to new premises at Heather — md Mike Stannard
1989	MAN midi introduced
1990	Optimo II launched
1992	Algarve II replaces Algarve I
1993	Optimo III launched and Algarve modified to meet roll-over
1994	First Caetanos for Ireland/First double deckers built for Hong Kong/Optimo is Midicoach of the Year at *CBW* Coach Industry Awards
1996	Optimo IV unveiled

Salvador Caetano

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'There's a brighter future in high-spec coaches'

True grit

Alan Millar looks at a six-vehicle operation where success has been earned by hard work

OUTSIDE impressions of Trueman Coaches can be deceptive. The modern coaches, strong corporate identity and comprehensive holiday programme suggest that this is a large organisation with resources that at least match those of some of the bigger regional operators.

Indeed, this Surrey operator considers that Shearings, Wallace Arnold and Excelsior are its principal competitors. Yet the initial outside impressions conceal the reality of a six-vehicle operation with a modest, compact yard and a far from ostentatious travel shop in a quiet rural high street in an area that doesn't spring immediately to mind as one of the best opportunities for selling coach travel. Its success should be an inspiration to many similarly-sized operators around the country.

Trueman's started in 1953 and today is a partnership between founder's son Richard Trueman and his mother Vera. It is based at the village of Deepcut, between Camberley and Guildford, on the doorstep of some substantially run-down, soon-to-be-redeveloped army barracks which, fortunately for the company, do not generate much of its work.

Until the early eighties, it was a highly traditional small operator, running lightweight coaches on school contracts and private hires, but Richard Trueman recognised that a brighter future lay in investing in longer life, higher specification heavyweight coaches and in selling its own holidays and day excursions. There was, and is, no intention of growing into a bigger business; just making decent margins from selling quality products to a discerning market. Success was recognised at the 1994 Coach Industry Awards when Trueman's won the Best Tour Programme

"This isn't a traditional coaching area and we had to work hard at generating business," says Mr Trueman. A combination of radio and local newspaper advertising, increasingly attractive brochures and open days helped attract custom and a contract with a local newspaper to operate its theatre and concert programme has further expanded the target market. "The newspaper reaches sections of the public and age groups which we wouldn't reach with our mailing list. It has opened up wider perspectives for us." These initiatives, and the trend towards people retiring earlier, are gradually

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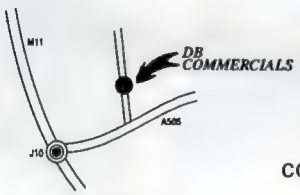

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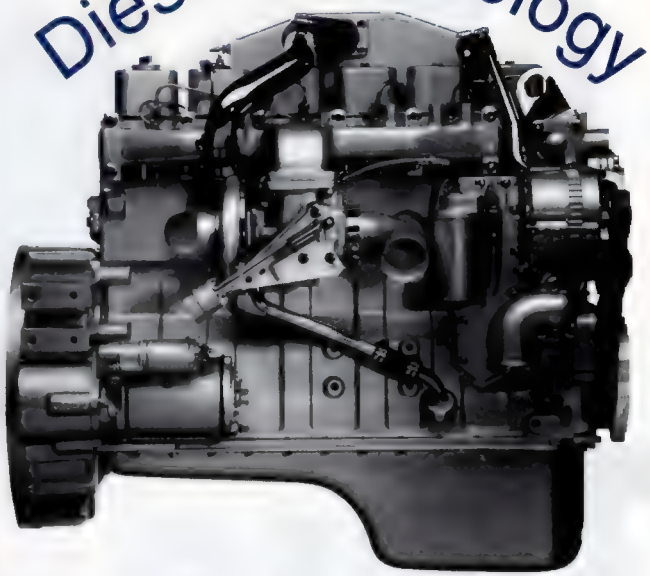

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bringing in a wider spread of customers, but – like most coach operators – Trueman Coaches still carries a high proportion of older people.

"We're not competing with the mass market holiday companies, so we find people who want a certain type of holiday and don't want to feel they're part of the mass," he says. "In this area, our prices tend to be on the higher side compared with some other operators. But people know that they will get a good quality vehicle from us. They won't see one when they book and get something else on the day."

Trueman's also makes sure there are no hidden extras in its advertised prices and it is able to command a slightly higher price by offering a guaranteed door-to-door service, mainly with taxis, for all holidays and excursions. Sales office staff also pride themselves in taking a caring interest in customers' requirements.

Richard Trueman: winner of Coach Industry Awards 1994 Best Tour Programme

It places great emphasis on the quality of hotels it uses, checking British ones personally and using wholesalers for Continental destinations which range from northern France to Tuscany, Austria and Eastern Europe. "We've reverted to using wholesalers because they have inspected the hotels themselves and, secondly, because if something goes wrong, it's easier for us to get satisfaction from a wholesaler than it will be for us with a hotel on the Continent," says Mr Trueman.

With hotels, Trueman's general policy is to put itself in its customers' position and buy only what its customers expect. "The bedroom is becoming more important. People like to walk into a room and feel it's good to be there," he says. "They're interested in the general ambience as much as the facilities. And when you think that it's the biggest chunk of what people are paying for, it's understandable.

"In the UK, people also look more for entertainment as well. Music is quite important and, depending on the party, people tend to be happy with something two or three times in a week. We don't use that as a feature in our brochure, but it's nice that people come back and say they've had a good time, that the hotel had a party night and there was a good pianist."

Day excursions sell well to a range of destinations from southern England to the Peak District, Black Mountains and the New Forest. There also are regular runs to near European destinations like Bruges, with low prices made possible by the cheap rates currently being offered through the Channel tunnel by Le Shuttle. Ferries still make better sense for longer tours.

Trueman's endeavours to cancel as few excursions as possible and will run to some of the nearer destinations even if bookings barely reach double figures. It's part of a policy of building up goodwill. "We regard the more local excursions

Trueman's: a family company building on goodwill

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Facilities determine choice of coach

as being for people who can't get about," said Richard Trueman. "People generally are looking for longer distance excursions, but at the top end of the age range, we have loyal customers who can't travel so far."

The Trueman's fleet is geared to the needs of the company's holiday, excursions and private hire commitments. When it switched to heavyweights, it moved up from a four-yearly to a five-yearly replacement cycle, stretched that to seven years for a while, but is back at five years.

It concentrates on the facilities available rather, necessarily, than on who makes its coaches and has run Scanias and Leylands in the past, Volvo, DAF, Bova and Van Hool integrals (a Cummins-engined Acron and an MAN-powered EOS) at present. The Volvo and DAF have Van Hool Alizée bodies. These err on the side of legroom rather than capacity, so Trueman's uses 53-seater excursion coaches where others might buy 57 seaters and 49 seaters for holidays rather than 53 seaters; its EOS has just 46 seats. This year's new coaches have air conditioning and, by 1999, Trueman's plans to have an all-air conditioned fleet.

"Being a small company, we've not got the facility to downgrade vehicles," says Mr Trueman. "So we sell them when they've still got a good residual value. If we kept them longer, the gap would get wider when we want to replace them." This policy, and employment of two fitters – one in the daytime, one in the evening – help minimise breakdowns and keep the small fleet on the road, earning money and gaining further positive exposure for the company.

Trueman's is about to invest in its future, having secured planning permission to develop its yard and put in a new workshop with covered parking and more modern facilities. As Richard Trueman explains, this will reinforce impressions as many customers prefer to book their holidays in person rather than by phone or letter.

He just wishes that the reality of running a tight ship was appreciated more by coach manufacturers. "An operator pays an awful lot of money for new vehicles and yet, if you go and buy a car down the road for infinitely less, you get far better back-up than in this industry. To my mind, aftersales is very poor."

In particular, he says he would like to see more effort put into dealing promptly with warranty claims, providing short-term replacement vehicles and for body and chassis manufacturers to be prepared to accept immediate responsibility for problems. "If something goes wrong, it's always somebody else's fault. We've got to argue and fight our corner. In the season, if something goes wrong, we've got to absorb the cost of hiring in vehicles. We're left to our own devices when, above all, we want an assurance that we can get an instant reply and an instant decision."

Yet, for all these frustrations, Mr Trueman is confidently planning modest future growth, assured that Trueman's made the right decisions in the early eighties and is largely in control of its own destiny. CBW

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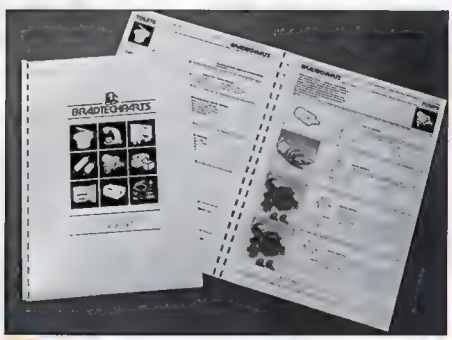

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ALEXANDER

Deckers for UK, minis for Kiwis

Royales for Lothian Region Transport, while Stagecoach New Zealand gets Mercedes-Benz 709Ds

by Mark Williams

LOTHIAN Region Transport 's decision to stick with Alexander for its latest bus delivery brings the total of the Falkirk firm's buses bought since deregulation to 278.

The latest batch of 33 Royale double decks on Volvo Olympian show the front-end redesign and gasket-glazed pattern of windows (left). Ten of the vehicles will be coach-seated for inter-urban services, and three of those with single doors for airport work.

● Stagecoach New Zealand is getting 21 Alexander-built Mercedes-Benz 709D-based minibuses. (above: Barry Hinkley takes delivery of the first from Bill Cameron of Alexander).

Commercial director of Stagecoach NZ, Ian Turner, said the order was part of a plan to increase frequency of services but at similar capacities until passenger loyalty and usage builds up: "The added benefit is that, in New Zealand, minibuses are taxed at a lower rate, which helps make the whole service more economical."

His opposite number at Alexander, Anthony Pursey, is hoping to expand on the order: "We are very strong in some key export markets, such as Asia, and we are working hard to build on this," he said.

HUGHES DAF

Harris chooses stunning Stenning livery

THURROCK-based Harris Bus plumped for three of these DAF DB250-based Northern Counties Palatine IIs when it needed to replace vehicles in its Lakeside Link fleet.

"Many of our older deckers were nearing the end of the road," said Frank Harris, md. "We searched in vain for suitable mid-life replacements before deciding to embark on a programme of fleet investment."

The stunning liveries are from Ray Stenning of Best Impressions, who has cunningly linked grass green and deep-water blue to reflect the environs of the shopping centre. It will help draw attention to the service's re-launch in October. Lakeside Link carries shoppers seven days a week from towns in North Kent. It is one of many services run by the Harris Bus' 25-vehicle fleet.

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NORTHERN COUNTIES

Palatines on time for Bullock's

MANCHESTER operator Ralph Bullock of Cheadle has its first Northern Counties-bodied vehicles.

The four Palatine-bodied Olympians were urgently needed to replace Daimler Fleetlines on a core route from Stockport to Manchester, taking in the university and all main hospitals — and Northern Counties was able to supply the vehicles immediately.

The vehicles, bought ex-stock, complement six other Olympians bought new and second-hand, all with East Lancs bodywork.

"We have also acquired four C-reg East Lancs-bodied Dominators from Brighton to join those we bought from Southampton five years ago," said Steven Bullock, partner and engineering director in the business.

DENNIS

Aintree contract won with a touch of class

NORTHERN Counties Palatine II bodywork married to a Dennis Arrow chassis was the choice of new bus for Aintree Coachline... and it's going on to a school contract.

"We won the contract a year ago," said proprietor John Cherry. "The Southport school was so pleased with the service which we were providing that it awarded us a three-year contract.

"I'd watched those children who arrive by car turning up in new BMWs and Mercedes, and decided that the contract justified investment in a new bus to demonstrate that buses are not a second-class form of transport."

Though Aintree Coachline does operate commercial bus services, they won't be getting the Arrow. In its spare time, it will be available for private hire, though.

Aintree Coachline was started by Mr Cherry as a one-vehicle business, but has grown to 12 vehicles. It selected the Palatine II Arrow because it was the only Euro 2-engined double deck available for August delivery... but it was a Hobson's Choice Mr Cherry doesn't regret. "Other manufacturers offered me a Euro 1 chassis, which I didn't want, while Dennis couldn't have been more helpful," he says.

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Except for trade-in bargains, all our basic prices include a new PCV MoT, full mechanical inspection/report with defects rectified and all necessary body repairs and repanelling
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E VW TRANSPORTER with wheelchair access. Diesel. Seat belts. 8 seater for **£2495**

E RENAULT TRAFIC 14 seater Petrol. Seat belts. Bargain for just **£1500**

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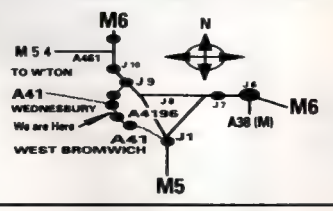

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Either 16 passengers with a huge boot or 19 passengers and a small boot. This superb value for money range of luxury mini coaches is unbeatable.

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This superb vehicle accommodates up to 19 passengers or 16 with an enormous boot. It is also ideal for wheelchair access carrying up to 10 wheelchairs.

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If you demand quality but insist on economy our Conveyor range is for you. Designed to offer stylish simplicity. The ideal bus for local contracts.

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Our superb 14-16 seater mini coaches are seen everywhere in the UK. These are the vehicles which set you aside from the pack. True quality and luxury.

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32 seats with tables, 46 seater executive coach compromising: Toilet, tv/video, kitchen servery area, optics, fridge, plated until April 1997.
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Not your usual rubbish. This vehicle is in first class condition, ready to work on any type of job. We are replacing it with a new one. Full MoT, video, in fact it has it all. Full service records available from a good stable
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VOLVO
1994 VOLVO B10M JONCKHEERE DEAUVILLE, 55 recliners, radio/PA
1988 E VOLVO B9M VAN HOOL ALIZEE, 38 reclining seats, toilet, cont door, T.V., video, radio/P.A./cassette
1978 VOLVO B58 PLAXTON VIEWMASTER, 53 seats
1977 VOLVO B58 PLAXTON SUPREME, 53 seats
LEYLAND
1982 LEYLAND LEOPARD ECW SERVICE BUS
MAN
1993 K MAN 11/290 JONCKHEERE DEAUVILLE, 51 recliners + courier, demountable toilet, continental door, TV/video,

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TOYOTA OPTIMO. 1989, 6 cylinder, tested July '97, recent engine rebuild, very smart, clean vehicle. Wheeltrims, TV, video, hot drinks machine, **£16,500. Tel: 01453 521444.** 65161/TO

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Very good condition, priced to sell
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+
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57 fixed seats, frame work rebuilt. Excellent condition for year.
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49 seater with TV, Video, Mid Toilet and continental door.
Seats recently re-trimmed in graffitit style moquette.
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48 reclining seats plus courier, partition to toilet and servery complete with fridge, water boiler, continental door, video/tv, radio/PA/tape, carpets & curtains
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VOLVO B10M
3.2 PLAXTON LOW DRIVE
53 recliners with retractable seat belts. MoT March 1997, warranted 261k miles only, 2 owners from new, we have owned since 1987, Telma, Webasto, underfloor locker and many more extras
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VOLVO B10M PLAXTON 3200 H REG
MoT TILL APRIL, '97
53 reclining seats, rear toilet
PRICE £69,750
Tel: 01389 754321
65096/VO

1989 B10M VOLVO MkII
Chassis rebodied by Van Hool January '93 with Alizee super high bodies, 48 reclining seats plus courier, partition to toilet and servery, complete with fridge and water boiler, video monitor, radio/PA/tape, curtains and carpets, continental door, choice of 2
£82,500 each + VAT
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1986 VOLVO B10M GL
Van Hool Alizee, 53 seats. Telma, usual high spec
£52,000 + VAT

1988 VOLVO B10M GL
Van Hool Alizee, 49/53 seats. Telma, a/c, toilet, exec spec. Choice of 3.
£73,000 + VAT
Contact Brian Mutter
on 01372 725252
65197/VO

B9 PLAXTON ALISON Auto, centre power door. Built for airport work, large luggage capacity + 32 seating. Full PSV spec, £28,000. **Blythswood. 0141 2213165 or 0141 6396107, evenings.**
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49 recliners + toilet, courier seat, tea/coffee machine, blue interior, MoT April '97, vgc,
£75,000

G reg VAN HOOL ACRON MAN
49 + toilet/53, brown interior,
MoT until Jan '97.
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LEYLAND LEOPARD
Alexander bodied,
53 seats, 1977-1978
All spares to fit Bristol VRT, LH, Leyland Leopard - National
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VARIOUS MINIBUSES FOR SALE, WHEELCHAIR ACCESS.
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1983 VOLVO B10M Plaxton 3500, 49-seat exec.
1983 VOLVO B10M Plaxton 3500, 53-seat Highliner.
1985 MERCEDES 608, 21-seater.
1983 MERCEDES 508, 18-seater.
1982 MERCEDES 207, 12-seater.
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All vehicles have long MoT
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WORK INCLUDED
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46-seater Doyen, toilet, reconditioned engine, new screen, tested until Feb '97, **£13,950**

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Fax: 01494 716331

VOLVO

1990 G VOLVO B10M TRI-AXLE VAN HOOL SH, 49 reclining seats, courier, rear toilet, continental door, boiler, fridge, d/glazed, excellent ..... ~~£85,000~~ **£80,000**

1989 F VOLVO B10M VAN HOOL ALIZEE DH, 50 reclining seats + courier, rear sunken toilet/continental door, double glazing, radio/PA/TV, boiler, excellent condition **£75,000**

1989 VOLVO B10M PLAXTON PARAMOUNT 3200, 57 reclining seats, POD, lockers, radio/PA **£59,500**

1988 E VOLVO B10M PLAXTON PARAMOUNT 3500, 53 retrimmed Graffiti reclining seats, courier, Telma, double glazing, POD, radio/PA **£59,500**

1988 PP VOLVO B10M PLAXTON PARAMOUNT 3500, 48/50 reclining seats, courier, demountable rear toilet/continental door, Telma, double glazing, TV/Video/Boiler, curtains, aircraft lockers **£59,500**

1987 PP VOLVO B10M GLE JONCKHEERE JUBILEE 599. 310 BHP, splitter, telma, 49 reclining re-trimmed seats (Graffitti), Courier, rear sunken toilet, fridge, boiler, bunk, TV/radio/PA ..... ~~£59,500~~ **£57,500**

1987 VOLVO B10M BERKHOF ESPRIT 340, 49 retrimmed Vogel reclining seats, courier, centre sunken toilet/continental door, boiler, 2 TV's, radio/PA. Air condition, Webasto. Choice of 2 ..... **£42,500**

1986 VOLVO B10M JONKHEERE JUBILEE 599, 51 reclining seats, courier, rear sunken toilet/continental door, double glazing, radio/PA, TV **£45,000**

1986 VOLVO B10M CAETANO ALGARVE, low driver, 49 reclining seats, courier, centre sunken toilet/continental door, air conditioning, radio P/A **£35,000**

1983 VOLVO B10M PLAXTON PARAMOUNT 3500, 51 reclining seats, courier, double glazing, Webasto, radio + PA, fitted with belts, new test **£32,500**

OTHERS

1993 K SCANIA K113 VAN HOOL ALIZEE H, 49 reclining seats, courier, centre sunken demountable toilet/continental door, retarder, d/glazed, bunk ..... ~~£99,500~~ **£95,000**

1986 PP LEYLAND TIGER Z45 VAN HOOL ALIZEE H, manual, 53 recliners, courier, radio/PA **£42,500**

1985 PP DAF MB200 PLAXTON PARAMOUNT 3500, 49 retrimmed reclining seats, courier, rear sunken toilet, continental door, boiler, radio/PA, provision for TV **£35,000**

1984 PP LEYLAND TIGER 245 VAN HOOL ALIZEE H, 51 reclining seats, courier seat, Telma, TV **£34,000**

SCANIA K112 PLAXTON PARAMOUNT 3500, 55 recliners, double glazing, manual gearbox, radio/PA, clean **£45,000**

1983 LEYLAND TIGER 245 PLAXTON PARAMOUNT 3200, express doors, **11 metre,** 53 seaters, radio/P.A, new stretch panels and repainted white **£23,000**

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1983 B10M GOLDLINER IV, 46 seats & toilet, retarder, test Mar '97
1982 B10M DUPLE DOMINANT, 46 seats & toilet, retarder, test Feb '97
1980 B58 AIR / LEAF PLAXTON SUPREME IV, 12M, 51 recliners, tinted glass, curtains, semi auto gearbox, test July '97

DAFS

1983 SB2300 JONCKHEERE P50, 53 seats & courier, private plate, test Mar '97
1982 MB200 12m PLAXTON SUPREME V, 53 seats & courier, tinted glass etc., private plate, test Mar '97

LEYLAND TIGERS

1983 DUPLE DOMINANT IV, Single tinted glazing, 55 retrimmed seats, 12m, express doors, semi auto gearbox, full test
1983 DUPLE DOMINANT IV, Single tinted glazing, 53 seats, 11m, express doors, semi auto gearbox, testing now

LEYLAND LEOPARDS

1979 PLAXTON SUPREME IV, 12m, 57 seats, power door, semi auto gearbox, tested June '97
1980 DUPLE DOMINANT 1, Phase II, express doors, 11m, 53 seats, Oct test

LEYLAND NATIONAL

Mark II, 680 engine, "B" series spec, 49 seats, testing now

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1977 AN '68'S Alexander Bodies, 82 seats - Choice

DAIMLER FLEETLINES

1977 Alexander Bodies, 74 seats - Choice

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L.H.S. 1975 PLAXTON SUPREME, express doors, 33 seats, test April '97

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1985 PLAXTON PARAMOUNT 3200, 53 seats, power door, test May '97
1983 PLAXTON PARAMOUNT 3200, 53 seats, power door, test April '97

BEDFORD

CAETANO 1977, 53 seats, test due

MINIBUSES

MERCEDES 609D, 1987, 19 coach seats, luggage racks, dropwell boot, tinted glass, power steering, test Nov '97
RENAULT DODGE 50 Series 1987, Alexander bodies, 25 bus seats, Perkins turbo engine, auto gearbox, full test - Choice.
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MERCEDES 608D, 1984, 21 coach seats, large boot, test June '97

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1991 (J) SETRA 215 HD, 49 seat exec, MoT 28/2/97, all white exterior, **£100,000 + VAT.**

1985 (C) LEYLAND TIGER, Plaxton Paramount 3500, low driver, semi, auto, exec, 51 vogal seats, recently re-trimmed, MoT 27/4/95, **£32,000 + VAT.**

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90 DUPLE 425 Cummins, 50 recliners, toilet, TV

90 TRANSIT, 15 PSV diesel. Tested.
90 TRANSIT, LWB 12 seat diesel PSV

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89 MERCEDES 208D, 12 seats
89 TRANSIT Diesel, 14 PSV tested

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88 F MERCEDES 709, 21 coach spec
88 TRANSIT, 12, Petrol
88 TRANSIT, 14 diesel, PSV
88 MERCEDES 814, 29 seat, 6 cyl, p/door

87 B10 VOLVO, Plaxton 3500 exec 49, toilet, TV

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84 MAN VAN HOOL ASTRON, 61 seats, toilet. TV

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83 DODGE R BURGESS, diesel, auto, 17 F dr.
82 B10 GOLD LINER, 53 seat exec.
82 DENNIS, V8 auto Alexander Service Bus
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78 LEYLAND Duple, express doors
78 LEYLAND EXPRESS Duple, 53
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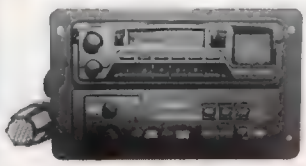

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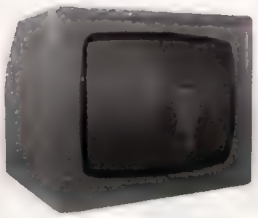

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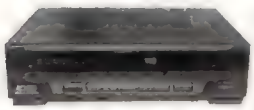

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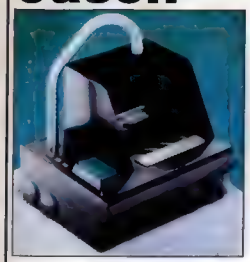

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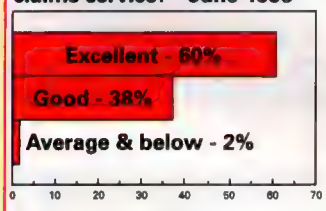

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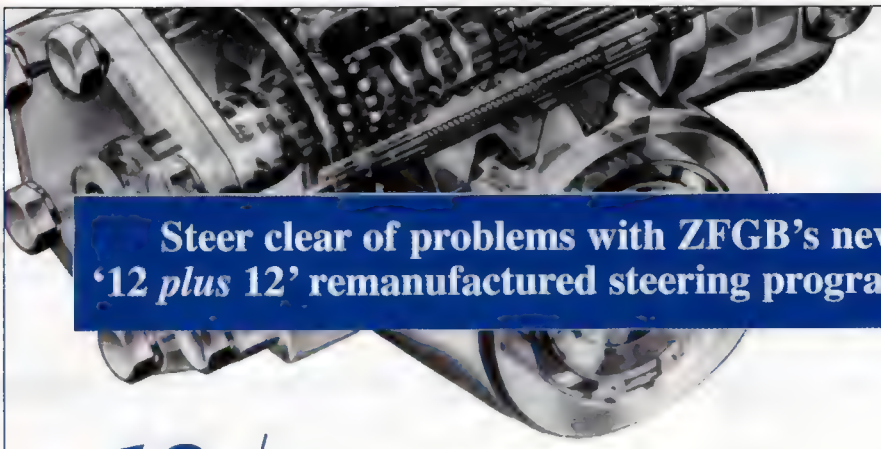

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C.P.V. CONVERSIONS, Alpha-Tec. tel: 01132 329559

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A to Z Directory
Telephone Numbers at a Glance

▼ Bus

Well-earned award for engineers

LONDON Central's engineering department has achieved ISO 9002, and collected its accreditation from South Eastern and Metropolitan traffic commissioner Brigadier Michael Turner (shown here, left, presenting the kitemark certificate to engineering manager John Walker, flanked by London Central md Douglas Adie.

"I am delighted with our engineers, who have worked very hard to gain ISO 9002," said Mr Adie.

▼ Bus

Simpson taken on board at Metroline

FORMER GMB North group finance and development director **Paul Simpson** has joined the board of Metroline of Harrow as a non-executive director.

He will be advising the management/employee-owned company in the area of financial markets, having qualified at Touche Ross.

▼ Obituary

'Duke' Bevan dies

Son, Pat will continue business

by Mark Williams

Duke Bevan: died while on holiday

KENNETH 'Duke' Bevan — founder of Dukes Travel of Coleford — has died of a sudden illness while holidaying in Malta.

He had taken his first 'real' holiday in many years with his wife, Barbara, having taken 'busman's holidays' on his own tours, but suffered a brain haemorrhage during a trip to Valetta, and did not recover.

Duke Bevan had his first brush with professional driving during his time in the Royal Army Service Corps, during which he completed a tour of duty in Germany. When he came home in 1955, he headed for tours of a different kind by becoming a coach driver for WT Edwards and Son. He was there 17 years.

After a three-year period when he ran Greystone Coachways with his friend Merrick Griffin, he founded Dukes Travel in 1975. It rapidly became a family concern, involving his son, Pat, and his wife performing secretarial and accounting duties on top of another full-time job. Dukes Travel now has five full-time staff and 11 coaches.

CBW Coach and Bus Week
The PSV industry's news weekly

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1. What is your primary job title? (Tick one only)

Owner/Director ❒01
Senior/General Manager ❒02
Engineering/Service Manager ❒03
Other (please specify) ❒04

2. What is your company's main business function?

Bus Operator ❒01
Coach Operator ❒05
Coach & Bus Operator ❒02
Local Government ❒03
Other (please specify) ❒04

3. How many vehicles does your company own/operate? (Tick all that apply)

	Buses	Coaches
1-5	❒01	❒10
6-10	❒02	❒11
11-15	❒03	❒12
16-25	❒04	❒13
26-39	❒05	❒14
40-100	❒06	❒15
101-400	❒07	❒16
401-1000	❒08	❒17
1000+	❒09	❒18

4. Do you have responsibility for the recommendation/ purchase and/or specification of the following? (Tick all that apply)

	Pur	Spec	Rec
Vehicles	❒01	❒12	❒23
Parts/Spares	❒02	❒13	❒24
Oil/Fuel	❒03	❒14	❒25
Breakdown	❒04	❒15	❒26
Insurance/Finance	❒05	❒16	❒27
Fuel Cards	❒06	❒17	❒28
Training	❒07	❒18	❒29
Venue/Attraction Tickets	❒08	❒19	❒30
Ferry Crossing	❒09	❒20	❒31
Hotel Bookings	❒10	❒21	❒32
Theatre Tickets	❒11	❒22	❒33
Other (please specify)			❒34

5. What type of work does your company undertake? (Tick all that apply)

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